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On Function-Centred Virtue Ethics, Character, and becoming Eudaimon

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Declaration

I, Shannon Yu-San Tseng, here declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Shannon Yu-San Tseng (10th August 2021)

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to develop an account of virtue ethics that takes Aristotle's naturalistic teleology to be central the understanding and reconstruction of the account's virtue theory. I call this account Function-Centred Virtue Ethics (FCVE).

In chapter one, I look at some of the dissatisfactions with the then dominant theories in moral philosophy that led to the revived interest in Aristotle's ethics that later became virtue ethics. Virtue ethics is recognised today as one of the three major approaches in normative ethics.

Chapter two examines some of the familiar contemporary objections to virtue ethics. These include objections against the theoretical distinctiveness of virtue ethics, the difficulty of codifying the virtues and providing action guidance, and the problem of explanatory inadequacies of virtue ethic theories.

Chapter three presents a reconstruction of Aristotle's virtue theory that takes his metaphysical biology to be the entry point to understanding his moral psychology. This chapter examines the distinctly Aristotelian concepts such as *arete*, *ergon*, *eudaimonia*, *hexis*, *boulesis,* and *telos* in the context of FCVE's virtue theory.

Chapter four examines the metaethical thesis that provides the normative justification on which FCVE reconciles a pluralist account of *eudaimonia* while maintaining its commitment to ethical objectivism about virtue and *eudaimonia*. I make appeal to Aristotle's function argument to ground a shared moral ontology, which delimits the range of true beliefs about the good and the correct interpretations of the virtues, without prescribing universal moral rules.

Chapter five examines the epistemology and empirical status of FCVE's developmental account of ethical perception. I present an account that takes both the reason-responsive dispositions (the *hexeis*) and the intellect's supposition of the true good as the two mental states involved in the function of ethical perception required for moral knowledge. This account highlights that in our understanding of *eudaimonia*, we should not overlook Aristotle's theory on the harmony of the soul, which can be correlated to the concept of congruence of the psychological self in contemporary psychology.

Abbreviations

Aristotle's Works

Cat.	*Categories*
DA	*De Anima*
EE	*Eudemian Ethics*
Met.	*Metaphysics*
NE	*Nicomachean Ethics*
Phys.	*Physics*
Poet.	*Poetics*
Pol.	*Politics*
Rhet.	*Rhetoric*

Plato's Works

Prot.	*Protagoras*
Rep.	*Republic*

For translation, I use Ross (1925) for *Nicomachean Ethics*, Brown (ed.), (2009).

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Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to develop a version of Aristotelian virtue ethics that responds to contemporary concerns about virtue ethics within the scholarship of normative ethics, meta-ethics, moral education, and empirical psychology. This account of virtue ethics adopts a naturalistic teleological reading of Aristotle's ethical doctrine; It subscribes strongly to his metaphysical teleological biology and thereby takes his function argument and account of the soul as central to the understanding of *eudaimonia* in its reconstruction of virtue theory. I call this account Function Centred Virtue Ethics (FCVE).

The purpose of developing FCVE is threefold. First, I show that virtue ethics, as FCVE, can be a genuine alternative moral theory to consequentialism and deontology by responding to objections that question the normative adequacy and distinctiveness of virtue ethics. Second, I maintain that virtue ethics, as FCVE, provides a more satisfying response than the other conventional moral theories to the perennial debate of ethical objectivity versus cultural relativism. Third, I assert that FCVE's account of moral psychology and moral epistemology is better supported by contemporary advancements in empirical psychology, thus strengthening FCVE's account of moral knowledge, education, and development.

Contemporary objections against virtue ethics in moral philosophy include i) structural objections, which challenge the theoretical distinctiveness of virtue ethics as a third major approach in normative ethics alongside deontology and consequentialism; ii) action-guidance objections, which challenge the anti-codifiability thesis and the extensional adequacy of virtue ethical accounts of right action; and iii) justification objections, which challenge the grounding of virtue ethics in ethical naturalism while eschewing natural teleology.

On this last point, older worries are also brought to surface, albeit in new areas. A current debate at the intersection of philosophy and psychology concerns the role the respective fields of study play in the theorising of moral education. This debate is formulated as whether moral education is best grounded in a 'moralised psychology' or a 'psychologised morality'. This debate essentially boils down to how one understands the relation between ethical theory and moral practice on the one hand, and how one understands the theoretical status of moral naturalism on the other.

Throughout this thesis, I aim to respond to these worries by developing FCVE. While FCVE shares much common ground with neo-Aristotelian eudaimonist accounts of virtue ethics, it differs from them in terms of methodology. First, whenever challenges arise, I respond to them by appealing to Aristotelian concepts and texts interpreted in light of his naturalistic teleology. Second, Aristotelian virtue-concepts in FCVE are understood by reference to Aristotle's moral psychology, which in turn is based on his metaphysical biology. Thus, FCVE appeals to the Aristotelian concepts of the soul, *ergon*, and *telos* in the reconstruction of his virtue theory, which many neo-Aristotelian accounts of virtue ethics have intentionally discarded from theirs. In doing so, FCVE differs from broadly neo-Aristotelian accounts of virtue ethics on two fronts. The first is the commitment of FCVE to a moralised notion of *eudaimonia* and rationality based on a teleological account of human function (*ergon*). This stands in opposition to the ethological interpretations that many neo-Aristotelians adopt, which I contend cannot ground normativity. Secondly, since FCVE adopts the metaphysical reading of Aristotle's account of human biology, it can show that *eudaimonia* (the human *telos*) is harmony between the two parts of the soul under the guidance of reason. On that score, normativity of virtue is gounded in *eudaimonia*, viz. both the virtues and the activities that derive from them presuppose harmony between the *hexeis* and reason. Additionally, I believe that insofar as FCVE is right, it can not only elucidate on the virtue ethical account of moral epistemology

and development, but also diffuse the heavy-hitting objections related to ethical relativism that have held back the development of virtue ethics.

Chapter one examines the critique of modern normative ethics and their metaethical foundations voiced by 'first wave' revivalists of virtue ethics in contemporary moral philosophy. The aim of the chapter is twofold: firstly, it serves to dismantle the metaethical footings of the question ‘what is right ?’ and to re-interpret them in terms of the question of ‘how should I live?’, viz. the question of right action cannot be conceived apart from the question of the good life or *eudaimonia*. Second, the discussion outlines the theoretical pitfalls FCVE needs to avoid in developing a distinctly alternative moral theory to consequentialist and deontological normative theories.

Chapter two addresses some of the more immediate fallout from virtue ethics’ attempt to forge a ‘third’ alternative to utilitarianism and deontology in the form of familiar objections against virtue ethics. In particular, the chapter addresses the difficulties of applying the Rawlsian twofold theoretical structure to virtue ethics, which resist conceptual reduction, and the more commonly encountered objections against virtue ethics actions guidance, which are non-codifiability, insularity, circularity, and the unexplained notions objections. While some accounts of virtue ethics are more susceptible to these objections than others, I show that FCVE is sufficiently robust in meeting these concerns thanks to its metaethical commitments and its non-reductive theoretical structure.

In chapter three I present an account of Aristotle’s virtue theory that takes his metaphysical biology to be the entry point to understanding his moral psychology. I explain that while FCVE shares much common ground with current eudaimonist accounts of virtue ethics, FCVE makes two distinctive claims. First, proper virtue is a reason-responsive disposition (*hexis prohairetike*) that issues in right action and feeling under the guidance of practical wisdom

(*phronesis*). When the *hexis* is in good condition and aligns with intellect's correct view of the good, then the agent's soul secures internal harmony and she performs the right actions; thus, harmony of the soul and right actions are constitutive of *eudaimonia*. Second, Aristotelian *phronesis* consists of both an instrumental means-ends function and an evaluative function based on the intellect, because the intellect has a natural impulse towards what is truly good through its faculty of 'wish' (*boulesis*).

Chapter four examines the metaethical thesis that provides the normative justification on which FCVE reconciles a pluralist account of *eudaimonia* while maintaining its commitment to ethical objectivism about virtue and *eudaimonia*. I make appeal to Aristotle's function argument to ground a shared moral ontology, which delimits the range of true beliefs about the good and the correct interpretations of the virtues without prescribing universal moral rules. I suggest that on the basis of these assertions, it is possible to understand moral norms from different cultures to nevertheless be objective despite their pluralism.

In chapter five, I present a developmental account of FCVE's ethical perception based on the evaluative sensibility model in empirical psychology. I show that there is much conceptual common ground between the psychological self on the evaluative sensibility model (ESM), and the notion of the Aristotelian soul, in which the *hexeis* represents the ethical self. Adopting ESM as a close Aristotelian ally, I show one way in which Aristotle's moral psychology, and in particular the concept of *hexeis*, can be conveyed in approximate terms in empirical psychology such that it yields an empirically cogent developmental account of moral epistemology. On this account, it is possible to proposition that moral knowledge is assimilated to the ethical self's epistemic capacities. This account brings to the forefront the view that we should not overlook Aristotle's theory on the harmony of the soul, which can be substantiated

as congruence of the psychological self, in our understanding of *eudaimonia* as constitutive of the psychological well-being and authenticity of moral agents.

Chapter One: Virtue Ethics Revival

The main aim of this chapter is to lay the groundwork for my thesis on Function Centred Virtue Ethics (FCVE) by first looking at some of the dissatisfactions with the then dominant theories in moral philosophy, which led to the revived interest in Aristotle's ethics that later became virtue ethics. Section 1.1 gives a brief account of the normative groundings of the respective moral theories of consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics.[1] My goal here is to show that although these moral theories may overlap in some of their considerations and approaches, they fundamentally differ in their normative justification and evaluation of key concepts. As a result, the three theories remain distinct in their normative structures and approaches to moral evaluation, among which I propose that virtue ethics offers the most plausible account that best captures our moral experiences.

In section 1.2, I expand on some of the reasons why virtue ethics, through its 'humanistic'[2] outlook that takes human norms and life as the point of departure of inquiry, offers a more convincing defence of morality in comparison to the other theories. In particular, I present and examine Anscombe's and Williams' critiques of modern moral philosophy, which have caused severe blows to the metaethical and normative foundations of deontology and utilitarianism. These include, on Anscombe's part, discussions on the concepts of right action and obligation in moral language, Aristotelian naturalism, and the adequacy of Hume's belief-desire

[1] 'Consequentialism' refers to moral theories that treat the goodness of consequences as their definition of moral rightness. Throughout the thesis, I use the terms 'consequentialism' and 'utilitarianism' interchangeably to denote teleological moral theories that take the goodness of outcomes as fundamental. I use the term 'deontology' throughout the thesis to refer to moral philosophies similar to, and exemplified by, the Kantian tradition, which hold the view that what makes (moral) actions right is their conformity with moral norms embodied in duties and rules (such as the categorical imperative).

[2] Here I use the term 'humanistic' to denote a position that takes the concept of agency, authenticity, and truthfulness in an agent's life as a central focus of the theory (Williams, 2002). Succinctly put by Moore in his discussion on Williams 'humanistic' philosophy, a philosophy is 'humanistic' insofar as shares in the belief that: "what philosophy can most quintessentially contribute to the project of making sense of things is whatever it can contribute to the project of making sense of being human" (Moore, 2008:10).

psychology; on Williams' part, these include discussions on the jurisdictional and linguistic concerns related to the "morality system" (1985:194).

Although McIntyre (1984) is another influential virtue ethics revivalist, whose work has strongly revitalised interest in Aristotelian virtue ethics, I do not devote a separate section on his work in this chapter because his critique of Enlightenment and Post-Enlightenment moral philosophy of the impartial and universalist character (e.g. Hume, Kant, Marx, etc.) already features in the discussions under various forms in Anscombe's and Williams' work. These notably concern Anscombe's discussion on the emptiness and subjectivist implications of the law conception of ethics and Hume's is/ought distinction, and Williams' discussion that on the impartial and universal notion of moral obligation as meaningless and alienating.

This chapter comes to a close in section 1.3 with a brief mention of some of the challenges that has arisen as a result of virtue ethics philosophers shunning conventional theoretical commitments in contemporary moral theories, which has led to a number of significant objections against virtue ethics. If virtue ethics is to fully take off, it needs to be able to respond to these objections in a convincing manner.

1.1 Normative Grounding and Ethical Implications

In contemporary discussions of moral philosophy, virtue ethics is often introduced as an alternative ethical approach that focuses on virtue-based act evaluation, in contrast to rule-based (deontology), or outcome-based act evaluation (consequentialism). Although this sketch holds true for the large part, subsequent discussions, such as whether a normative theory can be based on an agent's character or motivation,[3] often obscure what I perceive to be at the heart

[3] These discussions primarily arise from concerns over the theoretical structure of virtue ethics and how it appears inadequate when considered within the modern Rawlsian taxonomy of moral theories, where virtue ethics is understood as 'agent-centred' as opposed to 'act-centred'. These concerns are addressed in chapter two.

of the virtue ethics discussion: if there is any one distinctive quality that marks virtue ethics out as a genuine, alternative normative theory, I believe it to be the normative grounding of virtue ethics in *eudaimonia*.[4]

While there are a number of different theories within virtue ethics,[5] with little convergence even among eudaimonist accounts, the version of virtue ethics I will be developing, which I call Function-Centred Virtue Ethics (FCVE),[6] is an eudaimonist account that is firmly rooted in the Aristotelian tradition and draws extensively from Aristotelian resources, including his ethical and meta-ethical commitments.[7] FCVE appeals to Aristotelian themes, including human flourishing (*eudaimonia*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*), the doctrine of the mean (*meson*), function (*ergon*), and teleology (*telos*) as part of my efforts to engage with the larger picture that grapples with *the* fundamental question and starting point of ethics – 'How one should live?'.

1.1.1 The Deontological Foil

In FCVE, virtue-concepts are understood to be more basic than rightness. Normative standards relating to rightness are not derived from a set of normative standards independent or external to the agent, but rather from the virtue-concepts that are derived from and are constitutive of

[4] An in-depth discussion of the concept of *eudaimonia* will be conducted in chapter three; in the meantime, it suffices for the purposes of the current discussion to understand *eudaimonia* as flourishing – a holistic concept that encompasses all the aspects that make up a fulfilling life.

[5] The most prominent ones being eudaimonist accounts (both Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian), agent-based accounts, and target-centred accounts. See section 2.1.

[6] FCVE refers to the version of Aristotelian virtue ethics that I develop and defend throughout this thesis; it is neither Aristotle's ethics in its original entirety (for this would not be possible. And additionally, some scholars may object that Aristotle had a virtue ethics at all), nor the neo-Aristotelian interpretations of Aristotle's ethics. Rather, it is my attempt at interpreting Aristotle's ethics in a way that is fitting with contemporary discussions of virtue ethics. However, I revert to the use 'virtue ethics' when there is no need to mark the distinction, or where it applies to virtue ethics in general (as opposed to a specific understanding to FCVE).

[7] I will be discussing the virtue theory of FCVE is chapter three, and the metaethics of FCVE in chapter four.

eudaimonia.[8] In other words, what confers the property of 'rightness' to acts is based on what is conducive to, and constitutive of, *eudaimonia*. Broadly speaking, this difference in normative grounding is the main distinguishing factor between virtue ethics and deontological approaches to moral evaluation. Therefore, a virtue ethical account of what is 'right' would be that, an action is right if it is virtuous (understood with reference to *eudaimonia*), rather than if it follows from a moral norm such as a categorical imperative.

However, many misinterpretations result from the deceptively simple description above. In FCVE, although virtue is taken to be more basic than rightness, *eudaimonia* in turn is taken to be more basic than virtue. Therefore, what grounds the normativity of FCVE is in fact both *eudaimonia* and virtue, and not virtue *simpliciter*.[9] This is often an overlooked point. To borrow a familiar example to illustrate,[10] Archie is Bob's good friend, who is (wrongly) persecuted and pursued by some evil guards. Archie runs to Bob's house for safe shelter. The evil guards catch up and ask Bob whether Archie is hiding inside his house. If Bob were to follow what the virtues stipulate *simpliciter*, on the understanding that 'an action is right if it is virtuous', then he would draw the conclusion that 'telling the guards Archie was hiding behind the door is right since it is what is honest'. To say 'no' would be telling a blatant lie, which is dishonest. This example illustrates a mistaken view of the virtues, taken in their most basic and unqualified terms, which goes against how the virtues are conceptualised in FCVE.

[8] This is not to say that there are no standards of rightness to which agents can appeal, to find out whether an action is right. The claim I am making here is that the rightness of a particular action is not entirely independent of the agent in the normative sense that it is contained in *a priori* maxims or standards similar to those of Platonic forms. This does not conflict with the view that there are certain actions most of us would recognise as being right (or wrong). I present in chapter three that Aristotle holds that the 'rightness' of actions is understood in terms of *eudaimonia* (which include other closely related deontic concepts of *dei* and *kalon* understood within the teleology framework of *eudaimonia*). These concepts are further substantiated by Aristotle's metaethics discussed in chapter four by appealing to the human *telos* and *ergon*.

[9] In chapter two I argue that *eudaimonia* and virtue are inter-explanatory.

[10] This is my adaptation of the well-known SS guard example.

In fact, this example illustrates the many points of contention between FCVE and deontology. I discuss three of the differences below, concerning ethical scope, normative resources, and action guidance:

1. Ethical Scope:

   By grounding the normativity of morality in the virtues, and understanding them in terms of *eudaimonia*, FCVE endorse a 'humanist' ethical outlook, which takes the starting point of ethics to be, 'How should I live?' This is a loaded question, which at the best of times requires that *eudaimonia* be interpreted in a pluralistic manner – after all, it would not make sense for us all to aim at being Homeric heroes or Athenian noblemen from the fourth century BC, when Aristotle was lecturing on ethics. However, by taking this as our inquiry's starting point, it is natural for us to try to make sense of how our lived ethical realities and experiences factor into our ethical understanding. Themes such as who we are (both in terms of our personal identity but also as moral agents more generally) and what is important for us (why we should care) take center stage, as opposed to being treated as inconvenient concerns that need to be 'squared away' for the convenience of theory building. This stands somewhat in contrast to deontology with its commitment to moral rules, where ethical outlook is expressed in terms of duties and obligations.

2. Normative Resources:

   The humanist outlook on FCVE, which takes *eudaimonia* to be central, encompasses a biosocial emphasis[11] – this means that the theory not only leaves space for the inclusion of our species' biology and psychology (on account of the function argument), it also

[11] One of FCVE's strengths is that it has close correlations with empirical psychology. For while the normativity of FCVE is based on a metaphysical account of human biology, this does not exclude it from providing conceptual insights into moral psychology and, more recently, empirical psychology. See chapter five for more discussions on FCVE and psychology.

factors in the social and political environment that serves as the backdrop to our reasoning (captured by the *endoxa*). The outcome is that such an approach not only more accurately reflects our ethical experiences but is also more robust in being able to accommodate and explain our ethical differences. This differs markedly from duty-based approaches, where moral norms are understood in impartial and universal terms couched in isolated actions.

3. Action Guidance & Moral Evaluation:

   Since virtue-concepts provide justification for what is good and right (based on *eudaimonia*), the weight of determining what action to undertake (when, to whom, and in what manner) lies predominately with the agent and her judgment (viz. situational appreciation). By contrast, on deontological approaches, which action to undertake is determined by moral norms, where the moral worth of action lies in the agent's will. Action guidance in virtue ethics is therefore based on virtue-concepts: motivation for action issues from the agent (her character), who exercises her judgement to determine what the most appropriate thing to do is in each case. The action undertaken embodies the agent's choice in the fullest sense, which entails her agency, autonomy, and responsibility (Athanassoulis, 2013:68). It is also in this sense that who an agent is (i.e. her character, whether virtuous or not) contributes toward what life she leads and thus her flourishing.[12]

In comparison, deontological approaches are broadly prescriptive and universal. This has a deep implications for an agent's autonomy and agency, since it is fully possible for the agent to disown her actions, such as blaming it on the dictates of norms. This kind of dissociation is in fact more likely to pull one further away not only from morality but also from flourishing,

[12] See chapter five for the discussion on how philosophical considerations of agency, choice, and belief are taken as aspects of the psychological self in developmental psychology.

since it encourages agents to view people and situations in terms of duties and rules, and not as persons who one can relate to. It also encourages framing the agent's own actions in terms of obligations that are external to them, thereby depriving agents of their own decision-making thought processes.

Adopting the straightforward view that virtues prescribe a right action commits the mistake of understanding virtue ethics in a deontological manner, something which goes against the interpretations of FCVE. A virtue on the Aristotelian understanding is not so much a defined or pre-set norm contained in a list, but rather a response that is most appropriate to the situation, all things considered, embodied in a mean.[13] This key factor in determining appropriateness is further grounded in *eudaimonia*.[14] By focusing the 'framing' of the situation in terms of *eudaimonia*, moral concerns in FCVE are 'opened up' from the more narrowly conceived, obligation-focused considerations and brought into the context of the agent's life – what she values and is committed to, and the relationships that are meaningful to her – to inform what she should do. The virtue ethical formulation of the situation also invites the agent to exercise her autonomy in making judgments and decisions which involve her input, as opposed to merely engaging in a kind of determinate procedure following.

Virtue-concepts in FCVE thus reflect what is most appropriate,[15] and therefore right, in light of *eudaimonia*. The rationale for this is that, since *eudaimonia* is the final and ultimate good at which all other goods aim, it forms the justifiable foundation for what our actions should aim at. While deontological theories do include discussions of virtue-concepts, virtues are nevertheless understood in terms of their relation to norms such as the categorical imperative

[13] See section 3.3.2.c on discussions of the doctrine of the mean.

[14] The emphasis here is that *eudaimonia* is a normative concept based on the agent's *ergon*, as opposed to a value-neutral concept based on our species characteristics. For further discussion, see section 4.2.3.

[15] This is underlined by the Aristotelian definition of virtues, as being "concerned with choice, lying in a mean" (*NE* 1106b36).

(as opposed to *eudaimonia*). This renders their role in moral deliberation instrumentally significant, such as enabling the agent to muster the strength of will in fulfilling her duties. Normatively speaking, the concept of duty is what gives primacy to deontological theories. The normative grounding of deontology, unlike virtue ethics, is in duty and not in the virtues or *eudaimonia*. This means that other aspects in a moral theory, such as action, motivation, and outcome, are to be understood in terms of duty. The idea is that the duty of telling the truth is more important than holding onto a friendship, and what is right in the Archie and Bob example (i.e. what has moral worth) is evaluated on the grounds of whether Bob performed his moral duty of telling the truth despite finding it difficult, whereas in the case of FCVE, what is right concerns whether Bob deliberated on what was most appropriate in the situation and acted in a way consistent with *eudaimonia*, such as from the virtue of kindness to help a friend avoid distress.

1.1.2 The Consequentialist Foil

Given the emphasis on *eudaimonia* as the normative justification for FCVE, it might seem that FCVE shares with consequentialism in a teleological theoretical structure. However, the difference in normative grounding between virtue ethics and consequentialism lies in the different interpretation of goodness. Although both normative theories are teleological (a term coined by Rawls, where "the good is defined independently from the right, and then the right is defined as that which maximizes the good" [Rawls, 1999:2–22]), the concept of goodness in virtue ethics, namely, *eudaimonia*, differs from the goodness commonly taken by consequentialists to be happiness or utility. In virtue ethics, goodness is understood in terms of *eudaimonia*,[16] which takes as its initial starting point the moral agent herself as opposed to the

[16] *Eudaimonia* is both the first principal and final cause in Aristotle's metaphysics.

more impartial and egalitarian concerns that are promoted by consequentialism.[17] The scope of *eudaimonia* is wide,[18] and can be interpreted to recognise the achievements of an ambitious politician who spends her life fighting against injustices just as much as the personal fulfilment of a music teacher who runs an afterschool choir for local children. The essence of *eudaimonia* lies in the exercise of a moral agent's rationality in attaining the harmonious balance between the many activities that make up life of the moral agent in accordance with the conception of the good (i.e. that virtues and virtuous actions are constitutive of *eudaimonia*).[19]

While the interpretation of *eudaimonia* on FCVE follows Aristotle's in terms of its relation to the human function, I would concede that what FCVE might regard as eudaimon in terms of life's choice of activities may not be entirely in agreement with Aristotle's. The primary reason for this is historical – Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia* is closely tied to his account of politics, to which the ethics served as a preamble. Therefore, Aristotle's main concerns were stately ones, which lead him to view *eudaimonia* as qualities found primarily in the lives of statesmen or soldiers in terms of the virtues such as magnanimity and courage, among others. Thus, in the strictest terms, professions such as guidance counsellors or software engineers have not been conceived in his time, hence it would be inaccurate to attribute such life choices and the activities they pertain to as constitutive of *eudaimonia*. Nevertheless, insofar as FCVE's interpretation of *eudaimonia* is correct, then I claim that *eudaimonia* can support a wide interpretation to include lesser conventional life choices and activities. This wider

[17] *Eudaimonia* though is a personal concept, it is not a 'selfish' one in which the agent cares only for her own flourishing. In the simplest terms, the agent's flourishing would include the relationships she has with her wider environment, which includes friendship (*NE* IX).

[18] In chapter four, I defend an account of *eudaimonia*, which supports both a pluralist and objectivist metaethical position. I make appeal to Aristotle's function argument to ground a common moral ontology, which delimits the range of true beliefs about *eudaimonia*, without prescribing universal moral rules. This reflects the view that although the scope of *eudaimonia* is wide, it nevertheless is required to confirm to boundaries delimited by the agents motivation based on conception of the true good.

[19] For a more in-depth discussion of how the virtues relate to *eudaimonia*, see section 3.2.

interpretation could apply to Williams' example of Henry, a man who attributes huge importance to collecting stamps in his life (1985:203), or in more contemporary examples, Greta Thunberg, the influential teenage environmental activist. In considering whether their respective activities are constitutive of *eudaimonia*, among other factors such as whether their actions cause harm to others, would be whether the activities pursued follow from good motives and character dispositions. Collecting stamps based on the appreciation for and desire to preserve its history as opposed to strictly for monetary implications, and campaigning for the environment based on genuine concern to improve the planet's wellbeing as opposed to viewing it as means to achieve prominence, would both be motivation that follow from a correct conception of the true good. However, it is important to note that in these examples, the activities to which the agents devote their lives provide only a snapshot of their life; in assessing whether one's life can be considered as eudaimon, as Aristotle explains, it is the agent's entire life and pursuits that needs to be considered holistically.

Eudaimonia includes aspects that are both material and psychological, which differentiates FCVE from moral traditions that either do not have material predicates or only give concern to commensurable considerations. Thus, *eudaimonia* is a deeply personal concept because one cannot but make choices for oneself in the life that one cannot but live. Through the virtues, an agent comes to understand how to choose the activities that are constitutive of *eudaimonia*. Consequentialist conceptions of goodness, especially those commonly put forward in discussions of moral philosophy, often seek to offer impartial calculations of outcomes in terms of the aggregate of individuals' utilities. On FCVE, the central pursuit of ethics (and morality) is concerned with the agent and her flourishing (although this does not exclude concern for

others, for the agent's flourishing cannot not be understood apart from her relationships with her wider environment).[20]

This broadening of the range of considerations changes the teleological tone of virtue ethics in comparison to consequentialism, in that on FCVE, moral deliberation attends to i) the agent's perspective (as opposed to impartiality) in terms of finding the mean in relation to her *eudaimonia*, [21] ii) both commensurable and non-commensurable factors, and iii) most importantly, a non-instrumental view of virtue – viz. virtuous agents act for the sake of the good and therefore, some things can be considered intrinsically abhorrent and ought to be avoided no matter how they weigh out in terms of aggregate utility.[22]

In this section, I have highlighted some important distinctions in the ethical outlook and approach between consequentialism, deontology, and FCVE. In the next section, I will present some of the more prominent arguments virtue ethics has raised against the conventional moral theories of consequentialism and deontology that dominated discussions in twentieth-century scholarship, which subsequently prompted a (re)turn to conceptualising morality in a way that is aligned more closely with the ancient world.

1.2 The Revival of Virtue Ethics

The revival of virtue ethics did not start out as a unified project aimed at attributing to virtue-concepts a foundational role in normative theory building. Nor did early virtue ethics revivalists

[20] *NE* 1094a28–1094b10. More generally, Aristotle regards ethics as a branch of politics and his *Ethics* a prequel to *Politics*.

[21] This is not the point that *eudaimonia* is different for different people; rather it is the idea that excellences (i.e. the virtues), which relate to finding the mean can manifest differently for different people in different circumstances. See *NE* VI for Aristotle's discussion on Milo the wrestler. The question this gives rise to in terms of moral particularism and relativity is further discussed in section 4.1.

[22] For some actions are so abhorrent such that they take away from one's *eudaimonia*. For more recent examination on this subject, see Sherman's work on the topics of moral damage and moral injury (2014). This idea is further explored in chapter four, in which I discuss the limitations on the scope of *eudaimonia*.

uniformly look to any one philosophical figure to motivate their works.[23] Indeed, philosophers such as Anscombe and Williams may even have contested to being labelled 'virtue ethicists' or Aristotelian at all. However, what these philosophers had in common was their shared dissatisfaction with the then dominant forms of ethical thought, namely consequentialism and deontology, and raised questions concerning the normative justification for these moral theories. Anscombe's primary objective is to challenge the legalistic conception on which secular moral theories (such as deontology and consequentialism) were grounded, in which morality was conceived in terms of duties and obligations with an overriding character, expressed in terms of 'morally ought', 'morally right', 'morally permissible' and so forth. Anscombe argues that conventional moral approaches lacked the proper foundation (i.e. a higher lawgiver) to support the normative force of these moral claims. Anscombe complains that this resulted in a confused picture of what morality is. She called on philosophers to widen the scope of their inquiry to include themes in moral psychology (such as action and intention) and philosophy of language, as the starting point in the investigation of a moral theory that could be free from the conceptual errors that afflicts its contemporaries.

In a similar vein, Williams also took issue with the dominant forms of moral theorising at the time and sought to challenge the "special" force of morality that was understood in terms of duties and obligations with over-reaching powers (1985:7). Williams' central objection was that moral actions, for deontology and utilitarianism, seem to be the outcome of a mechanical moral decision. Williams held the view that such a tidy and self-contained approach, adopted as the hallmark of post-enlightenment philosophy, cannot help to bring about a philosophy that is "thoroughly truthful and honestly helpful" (2000:212) since it bears little reflection of our lived ethical experience. Hence, while Anscombe's preoccupation was to challenge the source

[23] Neither Anscombe, Williams nor Macintyre explicitly identified as Aristotelian scholars.

of legitimacy (normative grounding) of secular moral institutions that made obligatory demands on people's lives, Williams was motivated by skepticism about the overriding demands of the 'moral institution' that was at odds with his humanistic concerns to make sense of morality in relation to "the rest of life" (Williams, 1993:xiv). In doing so, their works opened people's eyes to other important issues hitherto little discussed, such as the nature of moral actions, moral motivation, moral luck and many other such interrelated themes.

The objections put forth by Anscombe and Williams have convinced many to abandon the conventional moral theories, that were the object of their criticisms, in search of new approaches. Despite the fact that neither philosopher espoused an explicit Aristotelian doctrine in their work, both Anscombe and Williams arrived at the conclusion that virtue-concepts (or in Williams' (1995) term, 'thick' evaluative concepts) offered the most plausible account of what could constitute a justifiable normative basis on which to evaluate moral actions. In other words, virtue-concepts seem to be the most well-rounded criterion on which we can understand and account for people's (moral) actions in terms of how they stand in relation to the good (i.e. their flourishing), which in turn grounds what is considered good and moral. Sharing this view, virtue ethics revivalists are united in their outlook that concern for human life, and a flourishing life at that, should not only be the starting point for moral investigation but also what ultimately makes morality intelligible as a concept and thereby gives morality its normative authority. This thesis engages with these concerns by examining the concept of *eudaimonia* and the conceptual links that justify how *eudaimonia* relates to virtue, choice and character that make up the moral landscape of FCVE.[24]

[24] These themes are explored in chapter three.

1.2.1 G. E. M. Anscombe

Anscombe's seminal article "Modern Moral Philosophy" (MMP) is widely credited with having launched the revival of virtue ethics (Anscombe, 1958). This is a slight misattribution as Anscombe herself did not coin the term 'virtue ethics'. Also, she did not attempt to build a moral theory that took the concept of virtue to be foundational, and she even argued that moral philosophy should be put on hold until there was a better understanding of philosophy of psychology. Nevertheless, MMP has been instrumental in challenging the ways in which philosophers approached moral philosophy.

Anscombe puts forth three theses in MMP:

1. The fact-value distinction thesis:

   It is not profitable for us at present to do moral philosophy; that should be laid aside at any rate until we have an adequate philosophy of psychology, in which we are conspicuously lacking. (1958:1)

2. The law conception of ethics thesis:

   the concepts of obligation, and duty—moral obligation and moral duty, that is to say—and of what is morally right and wrong, and of the moral sense of 'ought,' ought to be jettisoned if this is psychologically possible; because they are survivals, or derivatives from survivals, from an earlier conception of ethics which no longer generally survives, and are only harmful without it. (1958:1)

3. Thesis against consequentialism:[25]

[25] Anscombe employs the term 'consequentialism' mostly in reference to theories that take consequences or outcomes to be primary in moral theorising (i.e. utilitarianism). In particular, for Anscombe, consequentialist theories deny the distinction between intended and foreseen consequences concerning responsibility.

> The differences between the well-known English writers on moral philosophy from Sidgwick to the present day are of little importance. (1958:1)

Anscombe's philosophical approach was one suspicious of philosophical systemisation and the project of universalisation in the field of ethics.[26] Rather than being in the business of building a theory that aimed to reveal some 'truth', she seemed to be more interested in probing the foundational questions that concerned moral normativity in moral theories. One of these questions at the center of MMP was the source of normative grounding of the concept of morality. Anscombe argues that a notable feature in modern-day ethical theorising, that of moral imperatives (i.e. 'moral oughts'), is based on a legalistic conception of morality, which in turn is based on the psychological force of a now redundant (and therefore illusory) religious world view. As such, modern-day moral theories are afflicted with conceptual errors that distort our understanding of morality.

Anscombe's primary critique unfolds from thesis (2), where she claims that the concepts of obligation and duty in moral philosophy, embedded in the use of the moral 'ought', appeals to a 'law conception of ethics', which takes the institution of morality to correspond closely to the legal institution. On this conception, morality is articulated in principles composed of rules and obligations which are understood as *universally* required, obligatory, permissible, or forbidden, such as 'one ought not to lie'. The moral 'ought' on this understanding is equivalent to 'is obliged to' in the legal sense, which is misguided since the moral 'ought' cannot be justified in such a manner. The first issue bears on the genealogy of 'ought', the second issue concerns how the psychological force of 'ought' has survived "outside the framework of thought that made it a really intelligible one" (1958:6), and the third issue questions the validity

[26] My presentation and analysis of Anscombe's philosophy is based on Pigden (1988) and Teichmann (2008).

of whether there is anything at all capable of 'legislating' for agents in the moral sense.[27] Anscombe makes the case that in Aristotle's discussions of ethics, as well as those of all early ancient Greek philosophers, there were no similarly blanket terms of 'right' and 'wrong', as in modern times. Anscombe remarks that such terms are rooted in the concepts of sin, guilt, and blame, and were introduced by Christianity through a divine law conception of ethics. Despite society no longer accepting religious explanations of normativity, the psychological effect of the divine law conception of ethics has nevertheless remained, such that the usage of the moral 'ought', and with it the moral concept of obligation has been retained. Thus, there is little difference in conceptualisation between the divine law conception of ethics, understood in terms of commandments, such as 'thou shall not lie', and deontological theories, which, by retaining the psychological effect of the former, hold a law conception of ethics and attribute deontic status to actions, formulated as 'one ought not to lie'. Anscombe remarks that such deontic approaches should be surrendered, as a religious foundation to normativity in morality is no longer supported.

Having raised the concern that deontological theories seem unable to offer plausible normative justification for deontic claims and the notion of obligation, Anscombe further proceeds to show that the understanding of morality based on maxims influenced by a law conception of ethics is also problematic in practice. Her argument goes as follows: deontological theories adopt a law conception of ethics, such that moral actions have deontic statuses and are understood in terms of rules and maxims, which carry with them the notion of obligation or prohibition. This understanding is mistaken since theoretically speaking the normativity of the law conception of ethics is untenable, for moral laws can be made, sanctioned, and enforced only by a power superior to those bound by that law. Anscombe contests (a) Kant's idea of

[27] This point is further reinforced by thesis (1), where she analyses moral modals in linguistic terms.

self-legislation, since “the concept of legislation requires superior power in the legislator” (1958:2). Thus, while there might be something admirable about someone who chooses to live by certain principles, Anscombe does not accept that this counts as legislating. A contractual theory (b) is similarly unconvincing in generating the normativity for a secular law conception of ethics, since it is problematic to work out how one might give consent to enter into such a contract, in addition to the resulting contract being necessarily formal in nature and therefore being unable to cover the particularities of life situations such that it fails to be helpful (1958:14). Therefore, Anscombe concludes that we should look elsewhere for something that can confer legitimacy to the notion of the moral, to which she suggests Aristotelian virtue concepts seem to be the most plausible.

Furthermore, Anscombe contests that theories subscribing to the idea of universalisable moral rules are practically unhelpful because they fail to consider that actions need to be understood in context (i.e. in terms of their relation to intentions and not in isolated terms), since “a lie could be relevantly described as anything but just a lie” (1958:2). This means that an act may simultaneously accrue multiple deontic statuses, such as both ‘one ought not to tell a lie’, and ‘one ought not to hurt people’s feelings’ and it would not be clear which deontic status takes priority. For example, while one ‘ought’ to not cause bodily harm to another person, nevertheless, if a person is in harm’s way (such as facing oncoming traffic) and the only way to save her is to forcibly push her away from danger, which would cause her bodily harm in the process, most people would still agree that pushing the person out of harm’s way would be the right thing to do. However, it is uncertain whether general, universalisable maxims are able to make the distinction, in this case, between pushing someone in general (intending them harm) and pushing them to save them from harm’s way.

Anscombe protests that the overly coarse simplification that is inevitable of formal structures, such as a law conception of ethics, often render the maxims they prescribe futile: "universalizable maxims are useless without stipulations as to what shall count as a relevant description of an action with a view to constructing a maxim about it" (1958:2). This leads to thesis (1) of MMP, the 'fact-value distinction' thesis, which primarily addresses two concerns. The first relates to how actions could be understood in different ways under different descriptions.[28] The other concern is a meta-ethical one, which attempts to show how language is used in a shared understanding, such that it is possible for statements to be made that do not bear on some notion of absolute truth, but that hold true for a given context (i.e. a game). These themes come together to form the justification that moral 'oughts' can be understood intelligibly, despite not referring to deontological or legalistic notions of morality.

Having found deontic approaches to be implausible, Anscombe then turns her attention to the other dominant approach to moral theorising of her time, consequentialism, in thesis (3). While Anscombe identified the adherence to moral rules and obligations based on a law conception of ethics, and the resulting *content* of those rules as problematic for deontological theories, the issue for consequentialist theories arises through their adherence to a maxim, in which they let the consequences dictate the content of their theory, such that it is permissible under it to do intrinsically unjust things and to view them as just.[29] This is problematic, since morality as we know it would, under such reasoning, become a branch of economics in the sense that there would be no morality to consider, but only the best allocation of resources, which yields the best outcome in terms of utility. Anscombe does not deny that "what is unjust is sometimes determined by expected consequences; and certainly that is true. But there are cases where it

[28] Anscombe illustrates this eloquently in her discussions concerning 'brute facts'. See MMP pages 3–5.

[29] Anscombe is referring in particular to the sort of consequentialist theories put forward by Sidgwick, which deny the distinction between foreseen and intended consequences (1958:12).

is not" (1958:16). Her main point of contention with consequentialist approaches to moral theorising is that the theory, through its adherence to the maxim of utility maximisation, allows "*in advance*, that it is open to question whether such an action as procuring the judicial execution of the innocent should be quite excluded from consideration" (1958:17; emphasis in the original), something she perceives as corrupt and that would "destroy" the central tenets of morality as opposed to merely "stretch[ing] a point on the circumference" (1958:12).

Having demonstrated that both consequentialist and deontological theories struggle to offer both normatively and practically satisfactory accounts of morality, Anscombe suggests that the most plausible way forward is to look to Aristotelian-type conceptions of ethics (and away from a law conception of ethics), based on ""norms" in human virtues" (1958:14) for the moral evaluation of actions. Moral approaches that subscribe to universalisable maxims (i.e. that are codifiable) necessarily adopt a formal and formulaic approach in determining moral actions that use blanket terms such as 'right' or 'wrong'. Such terms, understood conventionally, are too thin to help us discern whether a (white) lie is appropriate in the here and now. Whereas virtue-concepts such as 'just' or 'unjust', 'honest' or 'deceitful', and so on enable us to discern whether a (white) lie is told out of dishonesty or kindness, because it allows for 'internal' considerations such as intentions to be factored into the evaluation. Most importantly, for Anscombe, the concepts of 'virtue' and 'flourishing' can help us bridge the 'fact-value' gap and thus restore the action-guiding function of facts while maintaining the relation of an act to the agent's intention without undue reliance on the (empty) psychological force of a law conception of ethics, the normative grounding of which is unfounded.[30]

[30] For further discussions of Hume's 'is-ought' gap, see section 4.2.

In effect she uses the concept of virtue as 'need': as a machine *needs* oil in order to run well, humans *need* the virtues a, b, and c in order to flourish. Facts about what we are (our nature or characteristic function), prescribe what we *need* to function well, namely, the virtues. However, the transition requires an 'if': i*f* we want the machine to run well, we *ought* to oil it. Accordingly, if we want to flourish, we *ought* to act in such and such a way. 'Ought' in this sense is used "in a non-emphatic fashion, and not in a special 'moral' sense" (1958:15). In this way, the further transition from 'need' to 'ought' is made possible.[31] However, Anscombe notes that the transition is possible only 'if' one wants to flourish. The key here, says Anscombe, is that "it is not possible never to want *anything* that you judge you need" (1958: 7; emphasis in the original); one usually wants what one thinks is good for oneself or what one thinks that one needs. In this way, she suggests, we can bridge the gap between 'is' and 'ought'.

But to revive an ethics of virtue, we need more than restoring the 'is-ought' inferences in language and logic with the use of hypothetical imperatives, like, 'if you want to become good at playing the piano, you ought to be practice diligently'. As set out in thesis (1), Anscombe declares: "It is not profitable for us at present to do moral philosophy…until we have an adequate philosophy of psychology" (1958:1). An important function of normative theories is that they should be able to provide helpful guidance in situations where moral agents struggle to decide what to do.[32] This function is known as action guidance.

[31] Anscombe is happy to accept the Humean analysis of 'ought', but she thinks that the transition from 'is' to 'ought' is problematic because the 'ought' "signifies no real concept at all" (1958:8). She believes that it is possible to logically link these statements with the use of another 'ought', e.g. 'I desire to pay what I owe'. However, she maintains that this is not the case with the categorical moral 'oughts': even if we introduced further 'oughts', the 'is-ought' transition would still be problematic because the moral 'oughts' are empty concepts; they are not really binding to people of a secular age who no longer see God as the legislator of moral law. So, it seems that 'is' entails 'ought' if 'ought' means 'what *eudaimonia* requires'.

[32] See chapter two for discussion on virtue ethics and right action.

Action guidance does not usually present as a problem when encountering straightforwardly evident moral situations, such as whether to save a drowning child. It is a reasonable assumption that as part of one's upbringing in any society, one has learned certain moral rules-of-thumb. Therefore, the real challenge in moral philosophy is not so much to find a theory that could codify moral content on matters such as the disapproval of the willful cruelty towards fellow men or animals (i.e. moral baselines),[33] but rather to guide us to understand the reasons why this is so, and more importantly to help us (i) 'internalise' this understanding and be able to discern what might be intrinsically or extrinsically unjust in order to take action in a range of situations, while (ii) avoid glaring inconsistencies in our moral reasoning and intuitions.[34] In layman's terms, a prime purpose of moral theories is to help us navigate moral grey areas, which are characterised by complex and conflicting considerations, such as cases concerning abortion or euthanasia, where an action with one deontic status (such as one ought not to kill) conflicts with another (such as one ought not to prolong suffering), and where situational factors are extremely relevant, such that understanding of the nuances between individual cases are more important than identifying their deontic status.[35]

If helping us navigate moral grey areas toward an appropriate action in response to a situation is chief among the most important functions for moral theories in practice (i.e. action guiding), then Anscombe is correct to place heavy emphasis on the discussion of 'borderline cases', which refer to situations of moral uncertainty, where it is not at all evident what actions should be taken (1958:12). Anscombe explains that borderline cases are especially difficult to contend

[33] The notion of moral baselines and global *endoxa* are further discussed in section 4.3 in the context of FCVE's pluralism.

[34] See section 4.1.2.b on the coherence of our moral beliefs in establishing moral epistemology.

[35] Although Anscombe calls attention to the importance of discerning what might be 'intrinsically' or 'extrinsically' unjust, she stops short of offering an account of what this might look like. Nevertheless, her account of 'brute facts' offers one way to better understand intention, motives and action that bear on the issue. Incidentally, I believe that Aristotle offers some insight to the intrinsic value of the virtues (and hence FCVE) in terms of *kalon*, as discussed in section 2.5.

with since acts can either be intrinsically unjust or merely "unjust given the circumstances" (1958:15) and it is not always clear how they can be distinguished. The difficulty in making the distinction lies partly in the shortfall in our current understanding of the philosophy of psychology (thesis (3)), where further investigation into action, intention, pleasure and wanting is required, such that we can arrive at a positive account of what type of characteristic virtue-concepts are and how they relate to the actions in which they are instanced (1958:4–5).[36] Anscombe suggests that only then might it be possible to "advance to considering the concept "virtue"; with which, I suppose, we should be beginning some sort of a study of ethics" (1958:15).

Anscombe's article is an essential and useful way to gain insight into the revival of virtue ethics. In particular, it offers a refreshing change to the way discussions on moral philosophy were conducted at the time, which she points out had the flaw of "proceeding from a barely concealed assumption of its own conclusion" (Teichman, 2002:39). In this way, Anscombe's article remains relevant not only in content but also in spirit, as a useful reminder for philosophers who take up the challenge in moral theorising not to commit the same errors, of which interpreting virtue-concepts in a deontological manner is one.

1.2.2 Bernard Williams

In "Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy" (ELP), Williams questions the project of the 'morality system' and labels it a "peculiar institution" (1985:174). According to Williams, the 'morality

[36] This is the only excerpt where Anscombe appears to explain why we need a philosophy of psychology: "In present-day philosophy an explanation is required how an unjust man is a bad man, or an unjust action a bad one; to give such an explanation belongs to ethics; but it cannot even be begun until we are equipped with a sound philosophy of psychology. For the proof that an unjust man is a bad man would require a positive account of justice as a 'virtue'. This part of the subject-matter of ethics is, however, completely closed to us until we have an account of what type of characteristic a virtue is – a problem, not of ethics, but of conceptual analysis – and how it relates to the actions in which it is instanced…For this we certainly need an account at least of what a human action is at all, and how its description as 'doing such-and-such' is affected by its motive and by the intention or intentions in it; and for this an account of such concepts is required" (1958:4–5).

system' seems to be an exclusive domain of modern moral philosophers.[37] Williams, like Anscombe, opposes the notion of obligation at the heart of both consequentialism and deontology.

He agrees with Anscombe that moral philosophy and the system of morality rest on a defunct, theological worldview;[38] its core moral terms, 'right' and 'ought', are meaningless without the presence of divinity. While Anscombe's challenge to the modern morality system stems largely from the perspective of philosophy of action and moral psychology, Williams poses his challenge by questioning the central tenets of the system, which he identifies as: (i) moral obligation, (ii) moral impartiality, and (iii) the purity of morality (1985:195). Williams claims that taken together, they reinforce an artificial delineation between 'moral' and 'non-moral' reasons. The former can claim a necessary over-ridingness embodied in the notion of obligations. Williams' position has often been described as 'negative', for he does not offer attempts to construct a moral theory. However, I contend that his contributions lie in the valuable dismantling of some deeply held misconceptions on the 'institution of morality'. His call for 'authenticity'[39] as the guiding concept in ethics serves to challenge what he sees as artificial constructs that lead to mistakes in our moral thinking, including the notable mistake of thinking that morality belongs to the domain of moral philosophers and can be captured by moral theories.[40]

[37] Philosophers such as Annas, Anscombe and Hursthouse also share in this view, suggesting this approach started with Sidgwick.

[38] Sarah Broadie for example coins the term 'quasi-religious' in her paper "Aristotle through Lenses from Bernard Williams" (2016).

[39] Authenticity in the field of ethics concerns identifying the kinds of question "which ultimately could only be answered through reflective living" (1985:200).

[40] Williams references in particular the conviction that moral views can be "identified without reference to their content, by some considerations such as their being practical maxims which are entirely universal or their being practical maxims which are acknowledged as overriding other practical maxims" (1993:74).

Starting with (i) moral obligation, Williams identifies a number of features of obligations which affect our understanding of morality: First, ethical considerations are expressed in the form of moral obligations, understood as "an important kind of deliberative conclusion that is directed towards what to do, governed by moral reasons, and concerned with a particular situation" (1985:175). Moral obligations are therefore *practical* and yield actions, i.e. there is an obligation to do something. The presupposition is that if we are obligated to do two things, X and Y, then these two obligations cannot conflict (1985:176), since one obligation would be *actual* and the other *prima facie*, and thus the former would supersede the latter. Second, moral obligations are inescapable, that is, "once I am under an obligation, there is no escaping it" (1985:177), because they are categorical (here Williams refers to Kant): they apply "to people even if they do not want it" (1985:178), and the only thing that can beat an obligation is another obligation (1985:180). This Williams calls the "obligation out-obligation in" principle (1985:181). Taken together, these features of morality paint a rather peculiar picture of the 'moral institution', which lays claim to an omniscient over-ridingness that demands agents to forego any other form of reasoning in their practical undertakings. This results in morality becoming an endless command of obligations, which is not only alienating but also unjustified.

For Williams, "each person has a life to lead" (1985:186), and the central ethical concern should be about how to lead a meaningful life. On this view, moral obligations are regarded as just *another* consideration (albeit an important one), because living a meaningful life takes precedence over attending to moral obligations. Williams defines these prudential, aesthetic and artistic considerations as "practical necessities" (1985:188), which he sees as holding valid ground whether or not they are rooted in morality. Suppose that an exciting career opportunity has arisen in one's field of interest and one might have to cancel a holiday vacation with friends

(1985:180)[41] – Williams suggests that these personal non-moral commitments (in this case choosing to stay behind and participate in an exciting work project) may override moral obligations (a promise to go on holiday with friends).

Let us move on to Williams' critique of impartial morality, tenet (ii) of his critique of the moral system. First, Williams points out that impartial morality "must sometimes require agents to abandon the projects that give meaning to their lives" (1973:116–117), which constitute who we are. On that score, impartial morality may *alienate* us from projects we hold dear, and even from ourselves. Williams here rejects the Kantian image of a moral agent who is impartial and indifferent to personal attachments as the abstraction from one's real circumstances, interests, emotions, and character. For Kant, motivation should only involve the rational application of impartial principle.[42] Second, the demands of morality may offend our "integrity" (1973:116–117).[43] Williams gives the example of Jim, a botanist who while on an expedition to South America is confronted by a local police chief and must make the decision to either kill one native Indian in order to save the rest of the group or let them all be killed. As this example shows, the ethics of utilitarianism may demand that we carry out a repugnant act or something against our commitments (1973:98). Third, impartial morality, says Williams, tries to explain why we are obliged to help by citing external reasons, which do not depend on the subjective

[41] See also the Gaugin example (1981), a painter who turned his back on his other commitments, including his obligations to his family, in order to devote himself to his art.

[42] "Once one thinks about what is involved in having a character, one can see that the Kantians' omission of character is a condition of their ultimate insistence on the demands of impartial morality, just as it is a reason for finding inadequate their account of the individual" (1981:14). For Williams, character consists of a person's projects or commitments, which is an indispensable element of a meaningful life.

[43] "The point is that he [an agent] is identified with his actions as flowing from projects and attitudes which in some cases he takes seriously at the deepest level, as what his life is about. It is absurd to demand of such a man, when the sums come in from the utility network which the projects of others have in part determined, that he should just step aside from his own project and decision and acknowledge the decision which utilitarian calculation requires. It is to alienate him in a real sense from his actions and the source of his action in his own convictions. It is thus, in the most literal sense, an attack on his integrity" (1973:116–117). Integrity for Williams is not moral integrity but personal integrity. It is the harmonious integration of the elements that make up one's identity (e.g., character, emotions, deep projects, relationships, etc.) and the maintenance of one's identity. Williams' point is that moral decisions should not violate the 'integrity' of agents.

motivational set of agents (e.g. desires, pro-attitudes, etc.). More to the point as Williams points out, there can be no external reasons, for all motivation involves a desire (1981:106–107).[44] We are not motivated to act (i.e. help) if we lack the desire (i.e. if we do not care).

Regarding tenet (iii), the 'purity' of morality, Williams attacks the view that luck does not make a moral difference when, in fact, our lives depend on factors we do not fully control. Williams claims that we praise, blame, and hold people responsible for what they are or do, although these are often matters of luck. He points out that had Gaugin not succeeded as a painter, we would blame him for leaving his family. Our attributions of responsibility, such as praise or blame, ultimately depend on what factually happens, and not on what could have happened. If Gaugin is morally justified for leaving his family because he was lucky to become successful, then moral justification is a matter of luck, as he could also have failed. Hence, the justification of our moral evaluations is luck-laden. If our goodness or badness depends on luck, then attributions of praise or blame are not clearly warranted.[45]

Does this suggest that Williams is urging us to abandon moral obligations altogether? Williams does not deny that obligations, like paying one's debts or treating others well, should count as ethical considerations. He suggests that obligations be grounded on the core ethical questions that concern a meaningful life. In this way, obligations become one among the various considerations that feature in our ethical deliberation. For Williams, if moral obligation clashes with our deepest commitments, then it seems that his response would be to say, so much the worse for impartial morality.

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[44] According to Williams, "…[N]o external reason statement could by itself offer an explanation of anyone's action…The whole point of external reasons statements is that they can be true independently of the agent's motivations. But nothing can explain an agent's (intentional) actions except something that motivates him to act" (1981:106–107). For Williams, reasons can only be internal reasons.

[45] We may summarise Williams' (1981:116) criticism of the notion 'purity of morality' as follows: according to the purity view, (a) morality is immune to luck, and (b) moral value is the supreme kind of value. He attacks (a) in order to prove that (b) is false. If morality is not immune to luck, then moral value is not supreme (1981:116).

Then what is the right way to think about ethics? Williams is not one to attempt system-building, such as by providing a criterion of rightness or suggesting a decision procedure for right action (1981:ix–x). He suggests that we first do away with the impartiality of morality in order to reclaim the 'ethical' domain.[46] Furthermore, asking the Socratic ethical questions, 'How should one live?' and 'How can one be good?' is a good start (1985:4). That is, ethics should be re-connected with what really matters in life (1985:34).

Like Anscombe, Williams draws inspiration from the ancient ethics of virtue. He suggests that we replace the thin terms of " right" or "wrong", with thick, descriptive concepts "such as 'cruel', 'brutal', 'dishonest', 'treacherous'…'chaste', 'kind-hearted', or whatever" (1995:233–234) because these terms describe states we can relate to, and hence they are bearers of knowledge.[47] While the idea of moral expertise is suspect, Williams says that moral knowledge is possible because thick terms can be communicated by someone with trained judgment, where he echoes the Aristotelian requirement of ethical perception:

> We do have an idea of a helpful advisor, who can see that something falls under a certain thick concept; he or she can see, for instance, the situation as being an example of treachery, something that hadn't occurred to the rest of us. (1995:235)

Although Williams is not traditionally seen as a virtue ethicist (and indeed may have quibbled about being labelled as one), he is nevertheless a pivotal figure in virtue ethics because he gives

[46] The 'ethical' domain, as Williams conceives it, is more inclusive than morality and contains things that philosophical moralists have marginalised or denied—e.g., moral character and moral emotions, like regret. For example, Williams (1981:28) argues that moralists cannot account for the sentiments of a deeply regretful "lorry driver who, through no fault of his own, runs over a child". Their theories say that he is blameless and imply that he should not feel bad.

[47] Williams says that "…[T]hick concepts provide the most promising area in ethics for delivering more than minimal truth, more than simply the surface facts. They provide examples of ethical statements that can not only be true but also be pointfully be said to be known by people" (1995:239).

primacy to the agent (one's projects, attachments, integrity, character, emotions, moral judgment, etc.) over rules in ethical evaluation and action guidance. Despite his anti-theoretical approach, Williams tries to show what it is that really matters in ethics and why, especially in line with people's lived moral experiences. His advice is that ethics should start from consideration of the agent and must treat the agent as an individual. An impartial morality that makes unreasonably demanding requirements, such as obliging an agent to sacrifice her deepest projects that would violate her integrity untenable. Furthermore, he shows how impartial morality fails to guide and motivate by relying on thin and empty deontic concepts which are not binding to agents. An ethics can only be action-guiding if it takes into account that moral reasons must be part of the experience and motivational set of agents in order to move them to moral action. As Williams sees it, our conception of morality should resonate with 'life as we know it', and not replace it with a system that shields us from the unpredictability of life in the attempt to make our lives ultimately or purely just.

1.3 Further Discussions

Anscombe's and Williams' concerns overlap most in the objection to the position that morality can be a codifiable enterprise and the theoretical implications this position entails. The rejection of codifiability by moral philosophers of the virtue ethics tradition, has led them to look for new ways of theorising about ethics and morality. Such attempts have encountered many difficult challenges, especially in action guidance, theoretical distinctiveness, and the defence of virtue ethics against relativism. I will examine these challenges in the next chapter, which also lays the foundation for my developed account of FCVE in chapter three.

Chapter Two: Objections to Virtue Ethics and Some Responses

In this chapter, I present an overview of the landscape of contemporary virtue ethics in section 2.1, which serves as the background for the discussions that follow in responding to the prominent objections that have been raised against virtue ethics. In sections 2.2 to 2.4, I will examine and respond to two categories of objections to virtue ethics: first is the structural objection (SO), which questions the distinctiveness of virtue ethics as an alternative (and third kind of) moral theory (Nussbaum, 1999:163);[48] second are the explanatory objections (EO) that challenge whether virtue ethics could provide an account of right action that does not suffer from explanatory incompleteness in terms of non-codifiability, insularity, circularity, and unexplained notion. In the last section of this chapter, I examine the deontic concepts that feature in FCVE's understanding of *eudaimonia*.

2.1 Overview of Contemporary Virtue Ethics

In recent years virtue ethics has become the third major normative theory alongside utilitarianism and deontology. Following its revival, many approaches of virtue ethics are on offer today, including Platonic, Humean, Kantian, and Nietzschean virtue ethics alongside Aristotle's, which is considered the main repository of virtue ethical ideas. In the field of normative ethics, virtue ethics is generally characterised as a theory that emphasises virtue concepts that pertain to the well-being of agents in terms of their character instead of articulating rules and principles of moral action. Critics have therefore pressed virtue ethicists to deliver a comprehensive account of the theory, which satisfies the central functions of a normative theory:[49] first, it must offer (a) an account of right action and action-guidance in

[48] Nussbaum questions whether virtue ethics could be considered a "distinctive approach to the major questions of ethics, a third major position alongside Utilitarian and Kantian ethics" (1999:163).

[49] The main question of modern and contemporary normative theory is 'How should I act?', viz. the question of right action.

terms of virtue, and (b) an account of the normativity of virtue itself, viz. the normativity of virtue based on the value of *eudaimonia* (Hursthouse and Pettigrove, 2018).

In response, contemporary virtue ethicists have labored to produce accounts of right action and action-guidance on the basis of the concept of virtue. Their attempts have generated a nuanced variety of virtue ethical accounts, largely stemming from the different ethical traditions that they take as their starting point, such as that of Aristotle's, Hume's, or Kant's ethics. Hence, coming up with a clear-cut definition of virtue ethics has proven a tall order. It seems that aside from sharing in the view that the concept of virtue itself is a central one, virtue ethicists cannot not even produce an agreed-upon definition of virtue.

In the early days of virtue ethics, it has been proposed that virtue ethics should be distinguished as an 'agent-centred' normative theory in contrast to 'act-centred' theories such as utilitarianism and deontology (Louden, 1984; Stohr 2006).[50] It has also been proposed that a theory is virtue ethical if (a) it gives primacy to the concept of character or virtue over the concept of right action, and (b) it has a theory of virtue (Watson, 1980).[51] However, the 'act-centred/agent-centred' distinction is not entirely helpful for three reasons. First, there are growing trends in deontology and consequentialism, which gives primacy to character or virtue in the development of their own respective virtue theories.[52] Thus, prioritising virtue concepts over rightness does not necessarily make an ethical theory virtue ethical. Second, within agent-

[50] In particular, agent-centred theories are supposed to evaluate or define right action in terms of the character or motivation of the agent, or in terms of how virtuous agents would act in such and such a situation. On the other hand, act-centred theories are supposed to evaluate or define right action without reference to the value of the outcomes of actions, or the performance of right actions themselves.

[51] Claims (a) and (b) are individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for an ethical theory to be considered virtue ethical.

[52] By virtue theory I following Russell's summary of Driver's (2006) definition as "a theory of what the virtues are" (Russell, 2009:ix). Virtue theory can be distinguished from virtue ethics in the sense that, the latter refers to a moral theory that takes the virtues to be central in the ethical evaluation of actions. Virtue theory, therefore, falls under the scope of moral psychology, whereas virtue ethics under normative ethics.

centred accounts as conceived in the above manner, theorists differ what grounds normativity of the virtues. This point of divergence bears important implications on whether the account is considered as 'agent-based', where normativity of right acts can be entirely derived from the virtuous agents inner motives, or the 'qualified-agent', where normativity can either be derived from the knowledge or actions of virtuous agents. Lastly, while most virtue ethical theories are agent-centred in the sense that it appeals to the virtuous agent in its account of right action, Swanton's account of virtue ethics is characterised not as agent-centred but as target-centred (Swanton, 2013), and thus would fall outside the act-centred/agent-centred categorisation.

There is also the sense that in holding different definitions of rightness, virtue theorists talking past themselves, and in doing so talking past normative theories from other traditions (Annas, 2014; Van Zyl, 2013). To proceed with our discussion, I adopt Van Zyl's terminology in discussing the different accounts of virtue ethics based on their respective theories of right action. Van Zyl's (2013) categorization offers a helpful starting point by grouping the different accounts of virtue ethics based on their responses to the normative adequacy demand. Van Zyl explains that an account of rightness could either be substantive, such that it answers the question 'what do all right actions have in common?', explanatory 'what makes an action right?', or both.[53] These accounts of right action would subsequently bear on the theory's adequacy in terms of both act-evaluation and action-guidance. Van Zyl outlines three categories of virtue ethics which are: agent-based virtue ethics, qualified-agent virtue ethics,[54] and target-centered virtue ethics (2013:173).

[53] Also see Das, 2003.

[54] Van Zyl's categorisation of 'qualified-agent' virtue ethics maps onto Slote's categorisation as 'agent-focused virtue ethics (Slote, 2010), which maps onto Hursthouse's categorisation as 'agent-centred' virtue ethics (Hursthouse, 1999).

Agent-based virtue ethics maintains the strongest evaluative link between an agent's inner state and account of right action. Slote's is the most influential example of agent-based virtue ethics, where his account defines right action *entirely* in terms of the virtuous agents' "motives, dispositions, and inner life" (Slote, 1995:84). This means that actions cannot be right or wrong in and of itself, for rightness is grounded on an agent's inner states. For Slote, virtues are not related to flourishing as conceived by eudaimonist accounts of virtue ethics; instead the normativity of the virtues lies in the motivation of agents.

Qualified-agent virtue ethics encompasses most accounts of neo-Aristotelian eudaimonist virtue ethics, where the virtues are regarded as excellent character traits that enable an agent to flourish, and where the evaluation of right action is linked to what the virtuous agent would characteristically do (Hursthouse, 1999). Hursthouse's account has attracted the most objections in terms of its normative adequacy. Critics point out that on the substantive front it is unable to account for the 'v-rules', which virtuous agents follow in attaining right action without collapsing into deontological theory, and on the explanatory front the normativity of 'v-rules' seems to commit circularity.

As seen from above, although producing very different accounts of virtue ethics, both Slote's agent-based virtue ethics and Hursthouse's qualified-agent virtue ethics nevertheless make appeal to the virtuous agent as part of their definition of virtue. For agent-based virtue ethics the normativity of virtue is grounded in an agent's motivation, whereas for qualified-agent virtue ethics the normativity of virtue is explained by reference to human flourishing, *eudaimonia*. By contrast, target-centred virtue ethics asserts no link between the evaluation of right action and the virtuous agent. The target-centred view developed by Swanton (2003), takes as its starting point the conceptions of the virtues already available to us, such as courage or kindness. Thus, it does not offer an explanation of the normativity if virtue. Virtue, defined

on a target-centred account, is then "a disposition to respond to, or acknowledge, items within its field or fields in an excellent or good enough way" (Swanton 2003: 19). On Swanton's target-centred virtue ethics, the rightness of acts is not determined by what the virtuous agents would do or choose to do, but rather by whether her actions hit the targets of the relevant virtues.

Having presented an outline of the contemporary landscape of virtue ethics, I proceed in the next sections, to examine and respond to the objections against virtue ethics.

2.2 Overview of Objections to Contemporary Virtue Ethics

The first type of objection, which I call structural objection (SO), is concerned with the systematic account that addresses the relationship between different parts of a moral theory specifically in terms of how they define and connect the 'main concepts of ethics' – those of the good and the right (based on Rawls' twofold division). SO refers specifically to the concern that since virtue-concepts are not the kind of things that can be explanatorily basic in a systematic moral theory, virtue ethics must be further grounded on either the good or the right, such that it collapses into a deontological or teleological theory. I respond to SO by showing how modern moral theoretical structures are unhelpful in capturing wider ethical considerations and scope, which FCVE succeeds in doing on an alternative theoretical structure that is 'inter-explanatory' (McAleer, 2007:213).[55] In this alternative theoretical structure adopted by FCVE, virtue-concepts are understood in terms of *eudaimonia*, whose definition is informed by several further supporting concepts such as *arete, ergon,* and *telos* that help to define the virtues. In this way, while the virtues would not be conceptually prior in the modern theoretical sense, one

[55] McAleer explains that in an Aristotelian account of virtue ethics concepts such as 'virtue' and '*eudaimonia*' are "fully intelligible only in light of the other, and neither is *the* basic concept; they are inter-explanatory and co-ordinate" (McAleer, 2007:213). I interpret McAleer's idea of 'inter-explanatory and co-ordinate' to extend to theoretical structures.

can nevertheless derive a distinctive moral theory that takes the concept of virtues to be fundamental (albeit in an inter-explanatory as opposed to a reductive theoretical structure), such as in the case of FCVE.

The second category of objections relate to action guidance, which I call explanatory objections (EO). There are four objections that fall under this category: non-codifiability, insularity, circularity, and the unexplained notion objection. Non-codifiability refers to the inability of virtue ethics to produce "a set of clear prescriptions which are readily applicable" in action guidance (Hursthouse, 1999:35). Insularity is a problem particular to virtue ethical accounts of right action, when moral evaluation is based almost exclusively on the agent's inner states such that it fails to take into consideration factors concerning external consequences in the overall outcome of a moral decision (Das, 2003:324). Circularity is a problem involving an epistemic concern about how to identify right action: 'Is right action identified in terms of the virtuous agent or is the virtuous agent identified in terms of right action?' (Das, 2003:325). Lastly, the unexplained notion objection is the objection that virtue-concepts must appeal to some further basic notion (of either goodness or rightness) else it appears to be undertheorised, such as in the case where it appeals to the concept of intuition (Das, 2003:325).

In response to non-codifiability, I will firstly examine the notion of moral codifiability in terms of how it harbours the assumptions of universality and legal proceduralism in the context of morality. It is on such assumptions that non-codifiability is often thought of as being associated with moral particularism or relativism. However, I argue that the label of moral particularism is misattributed to Aristotle (and FCVE). Aristotle's primary reason for rejecting universality (i.e. strong codifiability thesis)[56] is based on his acknowledgement that in matters of practical

[56] See section 2.3 on non-codifiability for a definition of 'strong codifiability thesis' (SCT).

affairs such as ethics, there will always be exceptions to rules.[57] Since the universalisation of rules is highly likely to be liable to exceptions, in the field of ethics, the agent's deliberation must be relied on to bring about the most suitable application of the correct ethical principle to the situation.

In response to insularity, I will show how the objection is more relevant when leveled at contemporary agent-based accounts of virtue ethics (such as Slote's), but that it does not have much force in FCVE. This is because for Aristotle, 'right' acts are those that are constitutive of the good, which is understood in terms of *eudaimonia*, as opposed to being entirely based on inner states of the agent. In response to circularity, I explain that the objection of circularity arises, once again, if one adopts a reductionist theoretical framework in the understanding of virtue-concepts and *eudaimonia*. For although an agent is virtuous because she undertakes virtuous actions (that are defined in terms of what is constitutive of *eudaimonia*), and the definition of *eudaimonia* itself is given in terms of the virtues and virtuous actions (i.e. activity of the soul in accordance with virtue; *NE* 1098a16–17), neither concept is reducible to the other.

According to FCVE, although virtues typically understand right acts in terms of good outcomes, the ethical status (i.e. goodness) of the acts are nevertheless not substantiated in terms of the outcomes but in terms of whether they are considered excellences (*arete*) in their relation to *eudaimonia*. In this sense, virtue-concepts are neither defined by a deontic or legalistic conception of 'rightness' nor by the value of consequences of actions but overlaps with the good and the fine.[58] Virtue and aretaic concepts are thus primary or fundamental rather

[57] This does not commit Aristotle to moral relativism. See Davia's (2016) discussion on universality in Aristotle's ethics, where he defends an account of there being principles that are not just true for the most part but are always true. My interpretation of the matter is further elaborated in chapter four, where I defend an account of Aristotle's moral realism and objectivity.

[58] See section 2.5 of this chapter.

than explanatory prior or basic in a structural sense. This means that although the virtues are more basic than considerations of outcome, outcomes nevertheless do feature as one aspect of the overall evaluation but would be so in terms of whether they are constitutive of, as opposed to instrumental to, *eudaimonia*. This discussion leads to the redress of the unexplained notion objection, where I present an account of the categorical commitments that FCVE takes as fundamental in an attractive sense, to give a more comprehensive understanding of *eudaimonia*, in particular I examine the Aristotelian notion of 'should' (*dei*), and the 'fine' (*kalon*).

2.2.1 Structural Objection

Structural accounts of moral theories aim to clarify and distinguish moral theories according to which ethical concept they take as 'basic'. To take a concept as basic means for the concept to provide the source of normativity in the theory; it is explanatorily prior to other concepts in the theory, which are understood in terms of the basic concept. Modern discussions on the structure of normative theories are largely based on Rawls' twofold taxonomy, where the "two main concepts of ethics are those of the right and the good" (Rawls, 1999:21). Teleological theories identify the good "independently from the right, and then the right is defined as that which maximizes the good" (Rawls, 1999:21–22). Deontological theories are defined in opposition to teleological theories; they identify rightness independently from goodness and then take as good that which is in accordance with what is right. Following from this, it has been suggested that for virtue ethics to constitute a third kind of moral theory, virtue ethicists must show how the concept of virtue is explanatorily prior to, or independent of, the good or the right, such that concepts of right and/or good are understood in terms of the virtues. This raises a problem for virtue ethics, as the theory seems unable to formulate the virtue-concepts in such a conceptually

basic manner and therefore as a result risks collapsing into the existing theories of either teleology or deontology on the Rawlsian taxonomy.

However, I contest that this objection stems from an unsupported premise that insists on taking the Rawlsian taxonomy as the only, or the most correct way, to understand moral theories and therefore virtue ethics. I respond to the concerns of SO, claiming that virtue ethics on the Aristotelian conception, and in particular FCVE, does not need to meet the requirements of taking virtue-concepts as basic in an explanatorily prior sense to count as a structurally distinctive, third kind of moral theory. In its place I suggest that the central claims of FCVE can be more accurately captured by a non-reductionist inter-explanatory theoretical structure that eschews the traditional hierarchical approach to moral theorising. In an inter-explanatory structure, moral concepts such as flourishing, the virtues, and excellences are understood as primary or fundamental rather than explanatorily prior or basic (McAleer, 2007:213). It is on such an account that we can properly come to terms with what Aristotle means when he explains how to understand right action:

> Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or temperate man would do; but it is not the man who does these that is just and temperate, but the man who also does them *as* just and temperate men do them. (*NE* 1105b5–7)

To address the challenge, I will not engage in the discussion that concerns how FCVE could be interpreted to fit the taxonomies of modern moral theories; that is, by considering whether virtue-concepts (and similar aretaic notions) can be read in a way that is explanatorily prior to a moral theory. This does not concede that virtue ethics is unstructured, but rather represents an endorsement of the view that ethical theories do not need to be "hierarchically and reductively" structured (McAleer, 2007:213).

However, SO does draw out an important question: 'On what grounds does virtue ethics differ from deontology or consequentialism?', 'Does taking virtue-concepts as fundamental in a moral theory yield new and distinct insights into morality?'. In the discussion that follows in responding to SO, I show how FCVE yields a distinctive account and understanding of morality based on taking virtue-concepts as fundamental, which cannot be satisfactorily identified with either deontological or consequentialist theories. FCVE subscribes to a view that is teleological yet non-consequentialist.[59] It is on such an observation that FCVE (and virtue ethics) constitutes a valid and "major alternative" to both the utilitarian and the Kantian deontological traditions (Nussbaum, 1999:164).

2.2.2 Watson's Objection

In "On the Primacy of Character" (1990), Watson raises the objection that the twofold Rawlsian taxonomy, where the main concepts are the good and right, from which the virtue-concepts (i.e. moral worth) are derived fails to adequately capture the central tenets of virtue ethics. Watson makes four complaints against the Rawlsian claim: the first is that Rawls' definition of teleological theories fails to accommodate virtue ethical theories such as Aristotle's, where the source of normativity is not based on the promotion of states of affairs or outcomes. The second is that, since deontology is defined in terms negative to teleological theories (i.e. non-consequentialist), this would suggest that Aristotelian ethics falls under the category of deontological theories, which Watson also denies. This brings him to his third point – that virtue ethics is a theory that is "at once teleological and non-consequentialist" (1990:450), a structure that is not recognised on the Rawlsian formulation, and hence he suggests that virtue ethics constitutes a third kind of moral theory. Lastly, Watson presents an account of virtue

[59] See section 2.2.2 on Watson's discussion.

ethics that departs from the teleological scheme altogether, which takes virtue-concepts to be the normative source from which the concepts of the good and/or right are derived (i.e. conceptually basic).

While Watson accepts Rawls' approach to the systematising of moral theories on account of which main concept a moral theory takes to be basic (a notion which many virtue ethicists reject as being "monistically reductive" [McAleer: 2007:213]), he proposes to replace Rawls' twofold division (teleological and deontological) with a threefold division, which he terms: 'ethics of requirement', 'ethics of outcome', and 'ethics of virtue', where the theories would take respectively the concept of duties, outcomes, and virtue-concepts as basic. Watson illustrates how this threefold approach gives a more accurate distinction between the moral theories, first by showing how this newly devised taxonomy can successfully distinguish between variations of teleological theories based on the following criteria:

a. Some version of the claim of explanatory primacy

b. A theory of virtue (1990:455)

Watson shows that both character utilitarianism and virtue ethics share condition (a), for both theories take the good to be the basic concept in the sense that they both explain virtue with reference to the good. While character utilitarianism takes the good to be the promotion of human happiness, whereas virtue ethics takes the good to be that of living a characteristically human life,[60] both theories nevertheless share a teleological structure. They are however, distinguished by the different substantive account they subscribe to in condition (b), where

[60] This account of happiness differs from flourishing (*eudaimonia*) understood in Aristotelian accounts of virtue ethics. *Eudaimonia* in FCVE is a value-laden concept, where (a) what is characteristic of the moral agent, i.e. rationality, derives from her *telos* and therefore does not refer to just any aspect that is related to functioning well as a human being, i.e. ability to operate opposable thumbs, and (b) *eudaimonia* is a normative concept of goodness (i.e. *arete*, excellence) such that it concerns the excellent functioning of rationality.

character utilitarianism understands virtues as *instrumental* to the good, whereas virtue ethics understands virtues as *constitutive* of the good. On this distinction, character utilitarianism is rightfully a teleological theory in the consequentialist sense, whereas virtue ethics is not.

However, Watson remains dissatisfied with this distinction, since despite the threefold taxonomy, virtue ethics is nevertheless still considered as a variation of ethics of outcome, albeit one that subscribes to a different theory of good based on the notion that virtues are intrinsically good (i.e. condition [b]). This means that virtue ethics does not constitute a distinctive, third kind of moral theory where the virtue-concepts are basic, since the virtues are still understood in terms of the good (i.e. human flourishing) rather than the other way around. Additionally, and more significantly, Watson laments that if the only factor that distinguishes virtue ethics is the claim to a non-consequentialist account of teleological theory, then perfectionism would also satisfy this condition, since it holds the virtues to be intrinsically good (1990:457), and yet the latter squarely falls under the definition of a teleological theory on Rawls' taxonomy.

Watson explains that for the distinction to be meaningful, virtue ethics cannot share in the same structural scheme as an ethics of outcome, even if the distinction could be made that it is of a teleological but non-consequentialist variety. To be recognised as an ethics of virtue on Watson's threefold distinction, the virtue-concepts need to be conceptually basic in the moral theory. This means that the moral worth of actions must be derived from the fact that the actions themselves issue from virtue, and not from the fact that the actions bring about certain valuable outcomes. Watson explains that while virtuous agents might care for certain outcomes for their own sakes, this does not commit them to the idea that the outcomes are inherently valuable (1990:459). He also denies that an ethics of virtue need refer to, as a foundational role, living a characteristically human life as intrinsically good. On Watson's account, living a

characteristically human life, even if it is intrinsically good or valuable, is not why virtuous agents choose it. Rather, virtuous agents choose to live characteristically human lives because the desire to do so is part of their excellence (i.e. the virtues). In no uncertain terms, Watson emphasises that for an ethics of virtue, appraisal is made "from the standpoint of virtue and is not its basis" (1990:459). This means that virtue ethics can only be considered a distinct theory if and only if the concept of virtue is taken as the basic concept, on which the other moral concepts of goodness and rightness are based. On this account, virtue ethics no longer shares any common ground with the teleological scheme.

In doing so, Watson is successful in formulating a structurally distinctive virtue ethics. However, the problem is that this account, in addition to being counterintuitive to, and estranged from, our everyday moral experiences, it excludes eudaimonist accounts of virtue ethics, which are paradigm accounts of virtue ethics. The latter implication is a major weakness of Watson's taxonomic scheme for it suggests that Watson's scheme is too restrictive. The paradigm case for virtue ethics, in so far as it looks to the revival of ancient ethical theories (and in particular that of Aristotle's), is eudaimonist and takes the concept of flourishing or living well to be central. This commitment identifies virtue ethics as adopting a teleological moral structure on the Rawlsian taxonomy from the outset, since the moral worth of virtues are derived from the conception of the final good. However, as Watson rightly observes, it would be a mistake to believe that virtue ethical concerns could be assimilated into the discussion of existing teleological frameworks, since virtue ethics, and in particular Aristotelian accounts of virtue ethics, are not conceptually committed to the promotion of an outcome or state of affairs.

In FCVE, to act virtuously is to act in a way that exercises one's function (*ergon*) excellently, which expresses virtue as an excellence (*arete*), even if the actions themselves "do not ultimately achieve their planned goals" (Sherman, 1989:176). As the moral worth of actions

lie overall in the exercise of the virtues, FCVE is more accurately described as a non-consequentialist account of teleological theories as opposed to how teleological theories are understood in the conventional sense (i.e. consequentialist). Since this distinction cannot be captured in the Rawlsian taxonomy and therefore assimilated into the structures of existing moral theories, I contend that FCVE does constitute a third and alternative kind of moral theory to utilitarianism and deontology, for which a new structural account must be recognised.

Watson's difficulty, which is also the main difference between his account and Aristotle's, lies in his adherence to the reductionist thinking adopted on the Rawlsian taxonomy, whereas Aristotle's does not. FCVE and ancient eudaimonist ethical theories in general, resist such conceptual reduction. For example, the concept of flourishing in FCVE differs from the more determinant ends that teleological accounts (perfectionism included) typically attribute to *eudaimonia*,[61] as well as what Watson takes as most basic in his ethics of virtue, which is simply the living of a characteristic human life. Aristotle recognised that there are many things characteristic about human life that can be manifested in states of excess or deficiency, neither of which are excellences constitutive of, or contributive to, flourishing. The virtue-concepts based on *eudaimonia* need to be understood in accordance with Aristotle's account of *telos*, *ergon*, *arete*, and other grounding concepts in FCVE. They cannot be understood independently as merely indicating 'what is characteristic of or beneficial for the possessor' as has been taken up by Watson as the basis of his ethics of virtue.[62]

For Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is an indeterminate concept (i.e. not one which agents can deliberate about directly),[63] which only becomes more determinate as a result of the virtuous (i.e.

[61] The idea here is that there are many ways an agent could pursue *eudaimonia*. See chapter four on pluralist interpretations of *eudaimonia*.

[62] Here I refer to context of the virtues but also the context of Aristotle's wider metaphysical biology and ethical naturalism. See section 4.2.

[63] See, for instance, *NE*1112b12: "We deliberate not about ends but about means".

excellent) activities and choices agents make, and the implications these actions have for their lives as a whole (Annas, 2017:268). Therefore, one cannot 'aim' at *eudaimonia* unless one takes the virtues to be central in the way one lives one's life. Since neither the virtue-concepts nor *eudaimonia* are by themselves the most basic concept, and each concept is only fully intelligible in light of the other, this suggests that virtue ethics does not in fact fit into the Rawlsian reductive structure at all. Rather than attempting to strait jacket FCVE (and virtue ethics) in the reductionist structure that entails the requirement of having a basic concept, a more helpful approach is to understand FCVE (and virtue ethics) as adopting an 'inter-explanatory' structure (McAleer, 2007:213), where moral concepts are fundamental or primary but not basic or prior.

Primary concepts are, on Annas' analysis of ancient ethical structures:

> the notions that we start from; they set up the framework of the theory, and we introduce and understand the other notions in terms of them. They are thus primary for understanding; they establish what the theory is a theory of, and define the place to be given to the other ethical notions, such as right action. However, they are not basic in the modern sense: other concepts are not derived from them, still less to be reduced to them. (Annas, 1993:9)

Annas points out that when comparing ancient moral theories with modern ones, ancient ideas seem difficult to "bring into focus" (Annas, 2017:265). This is in large part because ancient theories, though structured, do not meet the criteria of what modern theoretical structures take to be essential: that an ethical theory must have a structure that is (a) hierarchical and (b) complete. Annas defines 'hierarchical' to mean that concepts are understood in terms of being basic, and 'complete' to mean that the basic concept is sufficient in accounting for all the other concepts in the theory (1993).

Annas explains that ancient moral theories do not conform to modern structures; their scope of appraisal is concerned with how we come to understand and attain flourishing, which is more holistic in comparison to the concerns of modern morality being 'what one ought to do' in certain situations. However, the concept of *eudaimonia*, human function (*ergon*), the virtues and similar primary concepts are nevertheless systematically connected in an intellectual framework. For example, in FCVE, a virtue is understood as a disposition to do that which embodies the mean, which avoids excess and defect and is therefore excellent; but the notion of the mean is not "defined or justified in terms of (still less reduced to)" what a virtuous disposition is (Annas, 1993:9). Rather, understanding of the mean is further derived from the notion of excellences that pertain to the functioning of the rational and non-rational parts of the human soul, which issues in a choice (*NE* 1106b36–1107a2). An agent needs to grasp in its own right what sorts of action or which particular action in particular cases lie in the mean, such that it is an expression of excellence (of both her character and reason). Indeed, if she does not do this, she would not be considered as having understood what makes her actions virtuous. It is in this inter-explanatory sense (as opposed to a reductive sense) that we can come to properly understand the concept of *eudaimonia* and its relationship with the virtues and with character. Therefore, FCVE is truly structurally distinctive and thereby constitutes a third kind of moral theory.

In conclusion, if the worry of SO is that virtue ethics cannot offer a distinctive account of moral theory, then I hope to have shown that this is not the case:[64] FCVE is distinctive to the extent that (a) it does not fit into the teleological and deontological descriptions on Rawls' account, and furthermore (b) it requires an inter-explanatory structure to best describe the relationship between its concepts. However, if the worry is that virtue ethics cannot be a third kind of moral

[64] Although I cast my discussion in terms of FCVE, but FCVE does not have to be the only way to develop virtue ethics.

theory because it cannot be formulated in a way such that the virtue-concepts are explanatorily prior and basic, then, I believe, that the burden is on the critic to provide an account of why the modern reductive structure is the only acceptable structure in which to conduct moral discussions,[65] since inter-explanatory structures are still very much systematic in a way that is helpful for clarifying the relationships between the main concepts of a normative theory.

2.3 Non-Codifiability Objection

One of the most persistent objections to virtue ethics is that the theory does not provide adequate action guidance. Action guidance in contemporary moral discussions is often understood in terms of 'strong' codifiability, which takes the form of decision procedures that give "specific instructions for how to act, which are applicable to everyone in the same way" (Annas, 2004:63). Action guidance adopting the strong codifiability thesis (SCT) entails the criteria (a) of a decision procedure that determines right action in any given scenario, and (b) that action guidance would be impartial and universal, such that anyone (including non-virtuous agents) could apply them correctly (Hursthouse, 1999:39–40). The objection to virtue ethics action guidance is often presented as follows: virtue ethics provides inadequate action guidance because (1) moral theories should provide action guidance in the form of decision procedures (i.e. conforming to SCT), (2) virtue ethics action guidance is considered too vague and therefore provides inadequate action guidance to non-virtuous agents (for it is not codifiable in a way that satisfies SCT), because (3) virtue ethics adopts an agent-centred as opposed to act-centred theoretical structure.

[65] In fact, Annas presents an account to the contrary, a view supported by many virtue ethics revivalists, including Anscombe and Williams, that suggests the reductionist structure of modern ethical theories are at the root of the problem as to why modern ethical theories are so narrow in focus, which often leads to the dissociation of characters from acts and outcomes (Annas, 1993:10).

2.3.1 Louden's Three Objections on Non-Codifiability

In "On Some Vices of Virtue Ethics" (1984), Louden's objection to virtue-ethical action guidance is that virtue-concepts are too vague to offer definite action guidance in terms of act-evaluation and action-guiding principles. For example, virtue prescriptions such as 'act kindly' do not seem to offer much help for less-virtuous agents who wish to know what kindness is (what it looks like in different situations) or how to act kindly. Louden's worry is an epistemological one concerning the identification of virtuous agents when not knowing what to do if one is not virtuous: (a) how would the deciding agent know what a hypothetically virtuous agent would do in the circumstances, and (b) how would she recognise an actual moral exemplar? Louden claims that, instead of offering any concrete help, virtue ethics action guidance leaves us with a host of truisms, for it is entailed in the definition of the virtuous agent that she would characteristically perform virtuous acts. If agents were not already virtuous, what can virtue ethics offer them in light of its non-codifiable nature? Hursthouse captures Louden's worry as follows:

> Deontology gives a set of clear prescriptions which are readily applicable. But virtue ethics yields only the prescription, 'Do what the virtuous agent—the one who is just, honest, charitable etc.—would do in these circumstances.' And this gives me no guidance unless I am (and know I am) a virtuous agent myself—in which case I am hardly in need of it. If I am less than fully virtuous, I shall have no idea what a virtuous agent would do, and hence cannot apply the only prescription virtue ethics has given me. True, act utilitarianism also yields only a single prescription ('Do what maximizes happiness'), but there are no parallel difficulties in applying that; it too is readily applicable. So there is the way in which virtue ethics' account of right

> action fails to be action guiding where deontology and utilitarianism succeed. (1999:35)

Closely linked to the epistemological worry is that action guidance in virtue ethical terms is insufficiently adequate, since it cannot be codified in an algorithmic manner.[66] Virtues, as Louden correctly recognises, involve a host of skills, such as perception, sensitivity and deliberation, that cannot be adopted as a "decision procedure package deal" (1984:229). Herein lies the problem of non-codifiability. Take the virtue of kindness as an example. Virtue ethicists generally hold that kindness is the virtue that enables agents to feel, perceive and behave in ways that exhibit the quality of kindness. Louden's point is that kindness itself is not codifiable in a context-independent principle, such as, 'in order to be kind or act kindly, feel or do this or that'. This is highly problematic since it means that the usefulness of action guidance will be lost or limited to an agent's own virtuousness or lack thereof, which makes virtue ethical accounts of action guidance inadequate.

Lastly, Louden believes that the weaknesses of virtue ethics action guidance can be traced back to virtue ethics being 'structurally' impeded, since it takes agents to be the basis for moral appraisal as opposed to acts (1984:229). Louden believes that virtue ethics cannot provide an adequate account of action guidance because it lacks an act-centred criterion of right action, which results from the theory's normative commitment to agent-centred considerations. Consequently, action guidance cannot be formulated in terms of decision procedures that satisfy SCT as a structural corollary:

[66] I share Annas' view that the notion of 'decision procedure' in action guidance does not have to be understood in a rigid algorithmic manner. Rather, it could be understood as an attempt at organising and systematising ethical thought in a particular manner that conforms to SCT. My use of the word 'determinant' here is to denote that virtues are not concepts that could be codified in universal terms and later adopted by anyone to apply in specific cases, an approach that Annas terms the 'technical manual model' (2004:64).

> Act theorists, because they focus on discrete acts and moral quandaries, are naturally very interested in formulating decision procedures for making practical choices. The agent, in their conceptual scheme, needs a guide—hopefully a determinate decision procedure—for finding a way out of the quandary. Agent-centered ethics, on the other hand, focuses on long-term characteristic patterns of action, intentionally downplaying atomic acts and particular choice situations in the process. They are not as concerned with portraying practical reason as a rule-governed enterprise which can be applied on a case-by-case basis. (1984:228–229)

2.3.4 Response to Louden's Objections of Non-Codifiability

Louden seems to assume that SCT is a necessary condition for action guidance and the only adequate account for formulating action guidance. Virtue ethicists reject SCT because they think it is neither necessary nor sufficient for action guidance. Louden's assumptions are based on an (infrequently challenged) underlying commitment in moral philosophy, which takes the notion of morality to be based on a rational and fundamental principle (such as the utilitarian principle or the categorical imperative) that people can apply universally in an algorithmic manner to work out the rightness of particular actions.

Moral theories such as consequentialism and deontology, which adopt SCT, share the assumption that action guidance can be codified in a set of clear, universal rules, which serve as a decision procedure, that can be applied by anyone in any circumstances. However, this position relies on the further assumption that moral truths (truths about the right thing to do) can be captured in exceptionless principles and are applicable independently of context. For Aristotelians (and virtue ethicists inspired by Aristotelian texts), the subject matter of ethics, insofar as action guidance is concerned, is practical. As with most (if not all) practical affairs, there are often exceptions that require one to apply one's judgment in the interpretation and

application of moral principles. Being able to discern and recognise the particulars, for Aristotle, is "the mark of virtue" (Sherman, 1989:4). Aristotle gives an example of the rule, one "must pay back a loan to a creditor" (*NE* 1164b33), and explains that even such rules cannot be *exceptionless*, as in the case where one is required to choose between paying back a loan or ransoming one's father from the hands of brigands (*NE* 1164b34–1165a14). In this regards, Aristotle would most likely "reject outright the demand for a criterion of right action" (Brown, 2009:xxi) in terms of SCT-based action guidance.

The second reason virtue ethicists resist SCT-based action guidance is that they do not think it sufficient: by providing action guidance in terms of impartial and universal rules, act-theorists focus on the 'external components' of action guidance, such as promoting good outcomes, as opposed to 'internal components', such as motives and character. Hursthouse observes that this approach is flawed, since she holds that it is entirely possible that "one conforms to the letter of a rule while violating its spirit" (1999:40). Intentions and motives are very important considerations in virtue ethics, which gives rise against the worry that codification of action guidance in terms of SCT is likely to misattribute the "fit of intention" to interior as well as external circumstances (Sherman, 1989:26). For example, upon encountering an appeal for a donation, the moral agent may donate (a) to look good in front of her friends, (b) because she is embarrassed by her wealth and seeks to assuage her feeling of guilt, or (c) because she feels compassion towards the cause. In scenario (a), there is a misattribution of both intention and motive to outcome; in scenario (b), there is a misattribution of intention to motive and outcome; and in scenario (c) there is no misattribution of intention to motive to outcome. Virtue ethicists lament that action guidance based on SCT overlooks these important distinctions. For in situations (a) and (b), the agent performs the act of donating to the charitable cause but from selfish motives, whereas in situation (c), the act of donating is performed from the basis of virtuous considerations and concern for others (i.e. for the sake of the cause).

SCT-based action guidance neglects the sense that the moral value of right actions often *derive* from an agent being responsive to the moral salience, and therefore the moral requirements,[67] of a situation. For example, the moral value of making a donation towards a charitable cause does not lie in the usefulness of the pecuniary contributions (for this is the instrumental value), but rather that the agent's act of donation is a response to recognising the moral salience of the charitable appeal and cause. Aristotle explains that there is a distinction between 'acting virtuously' (i.e. doing the right thing) and acting virtuously from a virtuous disposition *as* the virtuous agent does (i.e. doing the right thing for the right reasons with the right affects) (*NE* 1105b5–10). While even the novice moral agent can perform 'the that' when counseled to do so, only the truly virtuous agent could perform 'the that' based on knowing 'the because', which is both the recognition of, and response to, the morally salient factors in a situation. In the case of the virtuous agent, unlike in the case of the novice moral agent, there is an "internalization of the value of the virtues such that one comes to affirm it" (Athanassoulis, 2013:43). In this way, acts are chosen and valued because they are virtuous and right. Developing the internal components of truly virtuous actions takes training, experience, and intelligence (VanZyl, 2019:130), which Louden correctly recognises. However instead of viewing this as a strength of virtue ethics action guidance, which could address some of the shortcomings of SCT-based action guidance, Louden views it as an objectionable feature, which stands in the way of the codifiability of virtue ethical action guidance.

Thirdly, in response to Louden's epistemic worry about how, in the absence of universalisable rules or principles, an agent can come to know and identify what virtuous actions entail, virtue ethicists argue that it is simply not true that agents (unless they are children) are blank canvasses, such that they do not possess a basic sense of what is virtuous or evil, good or bad,

[67] I use the term moral requirements here not in the deontological sense, but rather in the sense that the situation would confront the moral sensitivity of the virtuous agent in such a way that it compels a response from the agent.

and right or wrong.[68] Hursthouse explains that people in fact do often seek moral guidance on a daily basis from others; one might even deliberately consult someone less virtuous than oneself, hoping they will indulge one in one's errant ways, as opposed to consulting those who are more virtuous, for fear of being harshly judged (1999:35). This suggests that, on a common-sense moral level, most of us do possess a certain amount of learned moral knowledge.

However, such discussions that are the focus of inquiry pursued by SCT-based action guidance miss an important (Aristotelian) point: ethical reflection will not get off the ground until we "advance from thinking about and acting on particular ends to thinking about and acting on 'reason'" (Annas, 1993:29) in a way that underlies how one's actions in particular instances relate to one's life as a whole. Thus, while Louden believes that asking the question of morality concerns 'What should I do?' as opposed to 'How should I live?', virtue ethicists believe that it is the other way around.

2.4 Explanatory Objections: Insularity, Circularity, and Unexplained Notions of Rightness

A persistent line of objection against virtue ethics is its inability to provide an adequate account of action guidance because it is unable to provide a criterion of right action.[69] In responding to this line of objection, I examined in section 2.1 the structural worries behind the objection and explained that this worry can be resolved on a non-reductionist understanding of the theoretical

[68] The discussion of this objection is substantive (i.e. in the application to action guidance) and not normative (i.e. what right or wrong is defined theoretically).

[69] In the moral theories of deontology and consequentialism, action guidance and criterion of right action are often two sides of the same coin. For example, the criterion 'an act is right if it follows from a categorical imperative' would give the action guidance 'do what is in accordance with the categorical imperative', where the categorical imperative is understood as a set of moral rules and obligations. However, the case is not as straight forward in virtue ethics, for virtue ethics resist such reduction, thus one cannot take the virtue ethics criterion of right action, 'an act is right if it is virtuous' and apply it in action guidance 'do what is virtuous' for, as the objection goes, what is considered virtuous would have to further appeal to either acts or outcomes for action guidance to be intelligible or meaningful.

structure of virtue ethics. In section 2.2 I examined some of the (mistaken) assumptions that underlie this objection in terms its commitment to a particular formulation of action guidance, i.e. SCT, which virtue ethics reject on grounds of insufficiency, i.e. that SCT is a neither necessary nor sufficient condition for action guidance. In this section, I examine the objection against the extensional inadequacy of virtue ethics action guidance and criterion of right action in terms of the insularity objection, the circularity objection, and the unexplained notion objection.

In "Virtue Ethics and Right Action" (2003), Das claims that virtue ethics accounts of right action that take aretaic considerations as the basis of moral evaluation face the following difficulties: first, criteria of right actions produced in virtue ethics are either insular or circular; when they avoid insularity, they yield to circularity, and vice versa. Second, to evade the problem of circularity, these accounts try to explain aretaic concepts – namely the virtues and virtuous dispositions – by appealing to considerations such as acts and/or outcomes that are independent to aretaic concerns. Das posits that when virtue ethics accounts of right action appeal to factors other than aretaic considerations to ground the rightness of acts, they fall into one of the following three categories: if they appeal to further standards of rightness, the accounts become deontological; if they appeal to the value of consequences, the accounts become consequentialist; if they appeal to notions that are aretaic but are left unexplained (such as intuition), they invite the unexplained notion objection.

I will examine the complaints in the following order:

1. the complaint that the agent-based criterion of right action in virtue ethics is insular since rightness of acts is evaluated exclusively on the basis of an agent's (actual)[70] motives. This is the insularity objection.
2. the complaint that when virtue ethical accounts of right action evade the insularity objection by appealing to either the hypothetical virtuous motives (Slote: acts have to "be such that they *would* exhibit, express, or further" admirable or virtuous motivations in order to "qualify as admirable or virtuous" [1995:87; my added emphasis]) or to the hypothetical virtuous agent (Hursthouse: "An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would characteristically do in the circumstances" [1999:17]),[71] they succumb to the circularity objection. This is because, on either account, the definiens is defined with reference to right acts, for which they are supposed to be the definiendum. This makes the accounts explanatorily circular giving rise to the circularity objection.
3. the complaint that to escape the circularity objection, virtue-concepts must be reduced to further basic concepts, which might be deontological, consequential or some other concepts that are undertheorised. This is the unexplained notion objection.

2.4.1 Insularity Objection

The insularity objection refers to the problem that arises when a virtue ethical account of right action appeals primarily to an agent's inner state as the object of moral appraisal in understanding rightness, and thereby fails to take into account external considerations. The

[70] The distinction between actual and hypothetical motives is one Das has raised based on his interpretation of Slote's agent-based account of virtue ethics. Slote himself does not conduct the discussion in Das' terms, although he does implicitly move from actual motives earlier on in his article (1995:84), when giving a definition for agent-based virtue ethics, to a hypothetical motive in his modified account of right action later on (1995:87).

[71] I will be taking this account, developed by Hursthouse, as the paradigmatic criterion of right action for both Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian accounts of right action in this section. Hursthouse's interpretation of the criterion differs from the Aristotelian interpretation (and FCVE). I will indicate when this account is discussed in terms of Aristotle and FCVE, and when in terms of Hursthouse who takes a neo-Aristotelian interpretation of it.

agent-based criterion of right action developed by Slote states that rightness of acts is "entirely derivative from independent and fundamental aretaic (as opposed to deontic) ethical characterizations of motives, character traits, or individuals" (Slote, 1995:83).[72] On such an account, right actions are those which follow from an agent's good motivations; by the same token, wrong actions are those which follow from an agent's bad motivations. This may seem plausible when the agent in question is a virtuous agent and possesses virtuous motives. However, critics point out that because the criterion takes the value of an act to be entirely dependent on the value of motives, when the agent is not virtuous (and hence does not have virtuous motives) yet is faced with situations where certain behaviors ought to be performed no matter what the agent's motives are (e.g. saving a drowning child from shallow waters or comforting one's grieving relative), the problem of insularity surfaces. By basing the appraisal of moral worth entirely on the agent's inner states, an agent-based account of right action would have to commit to the position that 'saving a drowning child is wrong' if the agent did so under a non-virtuous motive. This position commits the insularity objection, for it fails to retain the distinction between "doing the right thing and doing the right thing for the right reasons" (Slote, 1995:84).

While Das is correct to recognise that the insularity objection applies to more extreme accounts of virtue ethics, such as agent-based virtue ethics,[73] the objection does not apply to more moderate accounts of virtue ethics, such as eudaimonist virtue ethics, which are agent-centred.[74] Slote explains the differences between the accounts on two grounds. The first is that,

[72] Another definition is given as "entirely derivative from independent and fundamental ethical/aretaic facts (or claims) about the motives, dispositions, or inner life of the individuals who perform them" (Slote, 1995:84).

[73] Agent-based positions have been characterised as "outré, misconceived, inappropriate, or obviously unpromising" (Slote, 1995:83).

[74] In discussions on criterion of right action, I will be using the term 'agent-centred' and 'qualified-agent' interchangeably to denote Aristotelian (and FCVE) and neo-Aristotelian accounts of right action, defined as 'right action is what the virtuous agent characteristically does or would do'.

on Aristotelian agent-centred accounts of virtue ethics, an individual does not have to be virtuous or noble to perform fine or noble acts; this indicates that the moral status of acts are evaluated, at least to a degree, by measures independent to agent-based considerations. Second, Aristotle characterises the virtuous agent as someone who perceives what is good or fine (i.e. that she is in the best possible position to know, perceive or judge what is right), which is an epistemological position that differs from Slote's 'constitutive' position, where virtuous agents are the measure of rightness *because* of their motives and characters (i.e. the inner states of virtuous agents constituting rightness) (Slote, 1995:83–84).

Das (2003:324) offers a different reading of the distinction, pointing out that the main difference between agent-based and qualified-agent accounts depend on what each theory takes to be its morally basic notion. Das observes that agent-based accounts ground the rightness of acts in the actual motives of virtuous agents, whereas qualified-agent accounts ground the rightness of acts in the hypothetical virtuous agent (or ideal virtuous agent). This distinction is significant, for it bears on the issue of how rightness is derived and hence what has explanatory primacy. The agent-based account is considered a structurally distinctive account of virtue ethics, where the aretaic considerations are explanatorily prior; it is the motive of the virtuous agent that makes an act right (i.e. this is a 'constitutive' account of right action).[75] The hypothetical agent account on the other hand subscribes to an epistemological account of rightness, on which the rightness of an act does not depend on the hypothetical virtuous agent and her motives in the ontological sense. Rather, rightness depends on the agent epistemologically, i.e. right acts are those which the virtuous agent characteristically does on account that she knows the acts to be right, which does not necessarily have to be based on an account of her motives. Hence, for Das, in agent-centred accounts of right action, rightness is

[75] Slote does not formally identify motives as 'actual' or 'hypothetical', although he does provide a modified account to supplement the original definition. See footnote 70.

based on considerations other than (although not excluding) the agent's inner state, such as the notion of appropriateness or the value of the external acts and/or outcomes. While the upshot of agent-centred accounts is that they are intuitively more plausible, since they pay attention to external considerations and thereby successfully evade the insularity objection, Das asserts that they do so at the cost of diluting the explanatory primacy of aretaic considerations and the distinctive characteristic of virtue ethics. On Das' read, aretaic considerations (i.e. the virtue-concepts) in agent-centred accounts are explained by reference to the 'good' conferred to them by ends, goals, rules or principles, and are therefore secondary concepts.

According to Das, insularity is therefore an unavoidable problem for agent-based accounts, as he does not think it possible that virtue-concepts could be understood independently of acts and consequences. On this point, Slote acknowledges the need for outcome of acts to bear some reference to "standards of behaviour" (1995:86) for the notion of virtue to be relevant to moral evaluation. In other words, it cannot be the case that an agent with good motives can do whatever she deems fit, so long as her motives are good (1995:86). To meet the objection of insularity, Slote subsequently modifies his account such that right acts are those which convey good motivations, "or be such that they would exhibit, express, or further such motivation if they occurred" (Slote, 1995:87).

However, Das claims that Slote, in appealing to hypothetical motives, brings his account closer to an agent-centred as opposed to a strictly agent-based account. This is because Slote's modification seems to be based on the idea that acts are right to the extent that they exhibit or are expressive of good motivations, which Das takes to endorse to the view that "the value of a disposition depends on the value of the actions that realise that disposition" (2003:329). If this is true, then the hypothetical virtuous motive account would come to resemble a variant of consequentialism, where the value of dispositions depends on the value of outcomes.

Therefore, Das believes that by moving from the 'constitutive' agent-based account, which derives rightness from the actual agent's motive, to the hypothetical agent-based account, which refers to the intended outcomes of the motives, Slote would lose the explanatory primacy of the aretaic concepts of the virtues.

Furthermore, Das points out that if Slote's account evaluates the rightness of action in terms of hypothetical motives to produce certain acts, then the account commits explanatory circularity. For when we say an agent is kind, we must have some notion of what kindness looks like so that we can correspond the agent's motives to her actions. However, for Das, when virtues do reference external considerations, even if only in terms of acts or outcomes that typically exemplify the virtue in question (i.e. that kindness is understood *in terms of* acts that are friendly, generous, or considerate), then the virtue-concepts become derivative and secondary concepts. Thus, to ground the explanatory primacy on secondary concepts would invite circularity for "one cannot hold that the value of a virtue is partly constituted by a disposition to do certain things without also holding that its value partly depends on the value of acts that realise those dispositions" (Das, 2003:330).

Before moving on to the discussion of the circulatory objection, I would like to point out a possible defence of agent-based accounts in response to Das' objection. On Slote's original criterion, 'an action is right if it is based on a virtuous motive'. This criterion references actual motives (D1). On his second criterion, 'an action is right if it exhibits or expresses a virtuous motive'. This criterion references hypothetical motives (D2). According to (D2), an action is right even if it lacks an actual virtuous motive; hence, rightness is a matter of whether the resulting act are in accordance with the hypothetical virtuous motive. I believe that the two criteria, D1 and D2, should be understood as two sides of the same coin, i.e. Slote's criterion

of rightness could be read as consisting of both criteria, with each criterion aiming at a different purpose:[76]

i) (D1): right action is constituted from actual virtuous motives
   – Explanatory Account.

ii) (D2): right action is evaluated on the basis of hypothetical virtuous motives – Substantive Account.

Criterion (D1) offers an explanation about the constitution of rightness, i.e. what makes right acts right. In other words, it is the ontological account which explains the source of rightness. Criterion (D2) offers a standard for act-evaluation and action guidance. It states that what all right acts have in common is that they express hypothetical virtuous motives. Hence, agents know that they should perform the acts that express such motives. While they are two sides of the same coin, there is a connection between the two accounts that makes them complementary. The acts that express hypothetical virtuous motives (D2) are right because, according to (D1), rightness is constituted by actual virtuous motives (of virtuous agents). The latter is, in a sense, the reference for the hypothetical virtuous motive for D2 (i.e. it is the ideally virtuous motive as it is the virtuous agent's actual motives, which must be virtuous). Hence, even if an agent lacks an actual virtuous motive, her act is right insofar as it expresses the hypothetical virtuous motive, which is ideal. Since D1 is based on a virtuous agent's actual motives, the account

[76] My point is based on combining (a) McAleer's distinction between criterial (epistemological) and constitutive (ontological) accounts of rightness (2007:220–21), with (b) Crisp's distinction between the substantive and explanatory tasks of normative theories (2010:23–24). A substantive account seeks the criterion or definition that clarifies what all right acts have in common. This is also the criterial or epistemological definition of rightness; agents can use it to identify or evaluate whether an act is right. The explanatory account seeks the explanation for why all rights acts are right. This is also the constitutive or ontological account of rightness. This account can therefore be used to explain how right acts are constituted, e.g. are they constituted by the good motives of agents? The moral agent can use this criterion to understand why a right act is right, e.g. because it is constituted by good motives.

prioritises aretaic considerations and does not appeal to the value of acts and outcomes to ground rightness.

This proposal also seems to be able to effectively deal with Das' circularity objection against Slote's (D2). In particular, Das suggests that the hypothetical virtuous motives of (D2) need to be further defined with reference to the value of outcomes or deontological notions. However, the hypothetical virtuous motives of (D2) are defined with reference to (D1), which makes the appeal to aretaic notions of inner strength or compassion.[77] Hence, this would refute Das' objection that by basing the rightness of acts on hypothetical ideal motives, Slote relinquishes the distinctiveness of the agent-based approach. By combining the agent-based criterion (D1) with the qualified-agent criterion (D2), Slote's account seems able to withstand Das' insularity and circularity objections.

2.4.2 Circularity Objection

Das critiques virtue ethics accounts of right action that manage to successfully evade the insularity objection as falling prey to the circularity objection. However, I argue that this is not necessarily the case, depending on whether one adopts an epistemological or ontological interpretation of the criterion "An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would, characteristically, do in the circumstances" (Hursthouse, 1999: 17). I base my account on McAleer's distinction between the two readings (2007:220–21).

Hursthouse's criterion of right action can be read in two ways. The ontological reading is understood as (a) whatever the virtuous agent would characteristically do is the right thing to do because the virtuous agent *constitutes* right action (constitutive view); whereas on the

[77] Slote gives further shape to his theory of intuition, stating that they could either be developed from a 'cool' notion that corresponds to inner strength, or a 'warm' notion that corresponds to taking compassion or benevolence as its aretaic foundation (1995:87).

epistemological reading, (b) whatever the virtuous agent would characteristically do is the right thing to do by definition, because the virtuous agent possesses privileged insight into what the right thing to do is and thus is "the best or only evidence that ϕing in circumstance *c* is right" (criterial view) (McAleer, 2007:220). In the latter case, the explanatory primacy of rightness exists independently of the virtuous agent, who performs action ϕ because she knows that ϕ is the right thing to do.

However, Das believes that on the hypothetical agent approach, Hursthouse's account still remains circular even if we take the epistemological reading, for it specifies right action in terms of the virtuous agent, and then the virtuous agent in terms of the virtues as character traits required for *eudaimonia*, whose definition in turn gives rise to the virtues that confer the ethical status of rightness to the action ϕ, which eventually describes a larger circle (2003:331). As Annas explains:

> If we define right action as what the virtuous person would do, but it turns out that the virtuous person is even in part defined in turn by the doing of right action, the claim goes, we have a circle, and so no explanation. (2004:68)

However, I argue that the epistemological reading would only be circular insofar as we accept Das' framework for discussing the problem based on the Rawlsian reductionist approach (i.e. that the virtuous agent must defined independently of their [performance of] right actions). According to Annas (1993:8–9), the reductionist framework requires that an ethical theory must (a) have a hierarchical structure and (b) be complete. In a 'hierarchical' structure, there is a basic concept to which all other concepts are reducible, i.e., the basic concept explains and

justifies the other moral concepts of the theory. Also, the theory must be 'complete' in the sense that the theory's basic concept is sufficient in accounting for all other concepts in the theory.[78]

Das' objection depends on this framework. In particular, the circularity of Hursthouse's criterion arises because there is the assumption that virtue must be the basic concept (i.e. the concept of virtue must not be defined or explained by the 'right' or the 'good'). As Annas points out, however, ancient moral theories do not conform to the structure of modern theories, which are expected to be hierarchical and complete. On that score, rightness is part of a larger framework of primary concepts that together establish "what the theory is a theory of" (1993:9), which assigns a place to be given to the ethical concepts within the framework. Returning to Hursthouse's criterion of right action, on this view, although right actions are those performed by virtuous agents (on their virtuous dispositions), the notion of right action cannot be defined in terms of or reduced to the disposition to do that which produces or sustains the virtues (Annas, 1993:9). This also hold true for the understanding of the relationship between the virtues and *eudaimonia* – that the virtues are an expression of *eudaimonia* does not entail that the concept of *eudaimonia* can be solely understood in terms of the virtues.[79]

2.4.3 Unexplained Notion Objection

Das seems to feel that, on this explanation, there is no constructive way of explicating the concept of the virtuous agent, via the concept of *eudaimonia*, without ultimately relying on the concept of right acts. For to understand the claim that 'decent people do this not that', there seems to be a 'this or that' independent to the virtuous agent. Since virtue ethics does not seem to supply standards external to the agent in terms of acts or outcomes such as in the case for

[78] A discussion of the differences between ancient and modern ethical structures can be found in section 2.1.1.

[79] For the virtues alone do not necessarily result in virtuous action (such as in cases where virtuous motives and choices fail to translate into virtuous actions because of external causes). Additionally, *eudaimonia* also requires that the agent has sufficient external goods (*NE* 1099a31).

act-based criteria of right action, Das claims that the virtue-concepts would need to rely on some further unexplained or undertheorised notion, against which he objects.

Once again, I believe that the unexplained notion objection can be traced back to the adoption of Rawls' reductionist framework in the understanding of virtue ethics. For Aristotle, the rightness of action is a practical matter and will need to appeal to the virtuous agent's judgment in the application of moral rules derived from *episteme*, hence the need to appeal to virtues and practical wisdom.[80] Furthermore, virtue-concepts in FCVE appeal to a range of further Aristotelian concepts to inform its understanding, such as the notions of *arete*, *ergon*, and *telos*, and how they stand in relation to *eudaimonia*. These themes will be further examined in the discussion of FCVE's virtue theory in chapter three.

Presently, I turn to discuss some deontic references in FCVE that illuminates the notion of virtue-concepts in response to Das' unexplained notion objection. I examine the concepts of *dei* and *kalon* as attractive imperatives, that underlies a correct understanding of *eudaimonia*, which ground the excellences that underlie the virtue-concepts in FCVE. What I hope to demonstrate is that, as defended throughout this chapter, FCVE (and by extension virtue ethics) is best understood in an inter-explanatory structure (since ancient ethics do not adopt modern reductionist structures) as opposed to Das' adoption of modern reductionist moral structures. On an inter-explanatory structure, the virtue-concepts and their relation to goodness and rightness are determined in terms of each other (i.e. they are all at the same level of explanation) such that the virtue-concepts which FCVE takes to be primary and fundamental are far from unexplained.[81]

[80] Based on the interpretation of Karbowski (2019), where he argues that recognising ethical knowledge as *episteme* as opposed to *techne* is not affected by the fluctuation of the subject matter of ethics (i.e. that it deals with situational specificities) nor rendered unnecessary by its practical aim (i.e. not what is most expedient).

[81] See chapter four for further discussions on the meta-ethical background of FCVE.

2.5 FCVE and Deontic Concepts

2.5.1. 'Dei': Should, Ought, or Must?

Most of the objections developed against virtue ethics boil down to how virtue ethics understands the concepts of, and the relationship between, the good and the right. While in most contemporary discussions, the two concepts are understood as conceptually prior over the other, I now want to briefly explore an alternative approach where attractive concepts (such as the good)[82] are related to the deontic concepts (the right) in an inter-explanatory sense.

The term *dei* appears most in association to Aristotle's doctrine of the mean. The doctrine is not meant to be taken as a criterion for right action (i.e. in issuing action guidance prescriptives) despite being part of the Aristotle's definition of right action. Rightness of actions is understood in terms of the virtues, with the virtues lying in a mean. Mean in this context refers to what is appropriate or fitting and thus what ought to be done. For example, 'generous actions' are actions that are considered generous if they lie in a mean, where the mean helps determine to whom we should give, how much and in what way such that the action fits the definition of the virtue generosity. To illustrate, giving to the wrong sorts of people (i.e. the undeserving) for the wrong sorts of reasons (i.e. for self-gratification) would not be considered generous.

In this sense, what is good (i.e. virtuous actions) is determined by what is right (i.e. what ought to be done). However, this is neither the teleological position, where what is good determines what is right, nor the deontological position, where what is right determines what is good. Rather, this is a position where what is good and what is right share in the common goal of achieving *eudaimonia*, the good end. Thus,

[82] Kraut (2006:179) gives a description of White's understanding of *dei* in both 'imperative' and 'attractive' terms.

(R_A) An action A is right (or virtuous or good) iff (a) A aims at a good end E,[83] and (b) action A realises this end, E.

Furthermore, the good end *eudaimonia* relies on the deontic term *dei* that is found in the doctrine of the mean, to specify the parameters of what are excellent and therefore contributive to *eudaimonia*:

> at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue. (*NE* 1106b21–23)

Kraut (2006) argues that in the framework for *eudaimonia*,[84] *dei* denotes a correct or right way to bring something about, whether it is within the enquiry of ethics or other practical activities. Kraut explains that in the Aristotelian understandings of craft, enquiry, action or decision (2006:179), be it medicine, cooking, or sculpturing, *dei* concerns the means (i.e. the right dose of medication, the right way to bake bread, the right amount of marble to sculpt) that promotes or achieves the goal of the respective domains. Hence, all uses of *dei* – including the use of *dei* in the moral sense – aim at the good: truth-telling is a *dei* because it achieves some good end, not because there is a special category and use of *dei* that is reserved for moral obligations. Conversely, wrongdoing is failure to promote or achieve some good, whether it is the good of the individual or the common good governed by the norms or laws that promote it:[85]

[83] For Aristotle, an action is virtuous iff it meets the following conditions: the agent i) knows what she is doing, ii) chooses the act for what it is (for no ulterior motive), and iii) acts from a firm disposition (*NE* 1105a31–34).

[84] Kraut holds the view that ancient moral theories in general lack the category of the 'moral' that entails the notions of moral duty, moral wrongness, and moral obligation (2006:163).

[85] Kraut (2006) explains: "What makes the adulterer's (or thief's or murderer's) failure to go aright special, and deserving of punishment and dishonour, is that his action pertains not to some minor or subordinate good, but interferes with the political community's efforts to foster the highest good of its members, by violating the laws designed to promote that good. Rightness and wrongness in every sphere of practical activity are explained in terms of success and failure to achieve (perhaps even to aim at) some good" (2006:175).

> What changes, when we ask questions about justice, friendship, war, and peace, rather than about medicine, sculpture, or poetry, is not the way the word *dein* is used, but the target towards which we look, as we seek answers to questions framed in terms of *dein*. (2006:173)

Irwin (1985) disputes Kraut's reading and holds that the 'moral' is sometimes independent of the 'prudential'.[86] He argues that *dei* refers to 'right' of an imperative kind, that entails other-regarding moral obligations. In his reading of *dei* on the doctrine of the mean, the virtuous action is right because it is what *orthos* (or 'right') *logos* dictates. Irwin explains that while the *orthos logos* (or *phronesis*) dictates that certain acts ought to be done because they promote some good end, there is a second consideration, which is that virtuous actions are right (viz. they fulfill all parameters of *dei*) because they tend to benefit others. Irwin suggests that the 'fine' (*kalon*) is such an independent, non-prudential reason. First, *dei* is about morally right acts, namely, the parameters of *dei* prescribe whatever promotes the common good. Second, *dei* requires that we choose the right act because it is fine (*kalon*). Hence, when the *phronimos* finds the mean (the right), she finds what promotes the good, and is also fine:

> These connexions between the mean, what ought to be done, what it is fine to do, and what benefits others, allow us to ascribe to Aristotle a fairly recognizable concept of moral obligation. What I ought to do, as he explains it, is conditional not on my good but on the good of others; and it is true that I ought to do it irrespective of my own interest. To this extent Aristotle has a concept of moral rightness, obligation and duty

[86] We find relatively similar readings by Annas (2018) and White (2002). Annas holds that the 'moral' is sometimes separate from the prudential but is not separate from virtue and the fine. She argues that *dei* introduces obligations grounded in virtue and prudential considerations. For White (2002), *dei* in some contexts introduces obligations that are grounded neither in prudential considerations nor in virtue. Rather, he argues that, in such cases, virtue and *eudaimonia* are defined by the fine and the just: virtue is determined by the parameters of *dei* above; *eudaimonia* is defined as virtuous activity, hence, it is defined by *dei* indirectly. Annas denies that moral reasons could be disconnected from virtue. Virtue introduces both attractive reasons and imperatives, as in the case of particular justice – e.g. reciprocal justice – which is prescribed by institutions (e.g., norms of exchange).

> independent of the agent's good, and he expresses this concept in his use of "ought." Failure to attend to this feature of Aristotle's view leads to the false claim that "there is no ancient Greek word for duty." (Irwin, 1985:130)

2.5.2. 'Kalon': The Fine

It follows from Irwin's belief of the moral that fine (*to kalon*) is a deontic concept. Irwin argues that virtuous actions are praiseworthy, and thus fine, because they aim at the good of the community. Irwin distinguishes between Aristotle's use of *kalon* when applied to different subject matters and arrives at the conclusion that different things are *kalon* not on a consideration that they share the same property that is *kalon*, but rather that different properties make different kinds of things *kalon.*[87] In the sphere of ethics, Irwin recognises that Aristotle employs the notion of *kalon* only insofar as it pertains to moral rightness that is based on a "non-eudaimonistic theory of the content of the virtues" (1985:121), such as in the case when ethics is understood as a branch of politics. For Aristotle, politics is the study of the most authoritative and highest good of all, which is the virtue and happiness of the citizens, understood as a life consisting of fine actions (*Pol.* 1280b39–1281a4). In this regard, the virtue of the fine is an other-regarding and thus deontic concept, which aims at the common good of a community, although this account also includes the agent himself:

> the actions done for the sake of another are especially fine and characteristic of virtue because they are done less for the agent's own sake (*Rhet.* 1366b36–1367a4). Hence "the extreme degree of virtue is to benefit everyone" (*Rhet.*1367b6–7), and the context shows that by "everyone" Aristotle means "everyone else." (Irwin, 1985:127)

[87] Irwin identifies four contexts in which Aristotle discusses *kalon*: aesthetic, natural, abstract, and ethical (2010:384).

However, I wish to take up the other account of *kalon* presented by Lear, one that interprets *kalon* in terms of intrinsic values (2006:117). I believe Lear's interpretation is preferable, for unlike Irwin who sought separate definitions of *kalon* that applies to different domains which *kalon* presides over,[88] Lear adopts an integrative approach that explains how the uses of *kalon* in different domains – beautiful, fine, and noble – in fact form part of a bigger and deeper understanding of Aristotelian teleology. When applied to ethics, *kalon* not only implies that actions can be considered fine or beautiful but also makes beauty central to Aristotle's account of the virtues. Lear's account is three-pronged and appeals to the concepts of (1) an effective teleological order, (2) visibility, and (3) pleasantness (2006:117).

For concept (1), an effective teleological order, Lear explains that Aristotle defines beauty in terms of "order, symmetry, and boundedness" (2006:120), understood against the backdrop of a teleological order that applies to a given object. For example, in the case of a city, the size of the city must be such that it does not impede its well-functioning (neither too large or too small); in the case of a sculpture, the sizes of the body parts must be proportionate such that it appears visually harmonious (with anatomic features being neither too sharp or too blunt); in the case of virtuous actions, the actions must lie in a mean (with appetites being neither in excess nor defect). However, appealing to (1) alone does not sufficiently distinguish the fine (*kalon*) from the good (*agathon*).

This brings us to (2), the concept of visibility, which he extends to the sphere of ethics in terms of praiseworthiness.[89] Lear explains that for something to be praiseworthy, the action has to be

[88] Aristotle never explains what *kalon* is in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, although it is a concept that he applies to in his other works on practical philosophy, including the *Politics*, *Poetics*, and *Rhetoric*, as well as in his discussions on biology, cosmology, and mathematics (Lear, 2006:118).

[89] Irwin (1985:126) identifies the passages of praiseworthiness in *NE* 1101b31–2; 1109a29–30; 1144a26; 1155a28–30.

visible, which in Aristotle's sense would be acts that are in the public view and are notable.[90] Being visible and praiseworthy on Lear's interpretation, however, does not necessarily entail Irwin's interpretation that they are done for the wider good and are thus praiseworthy. For Lear objects that when a brave person sacrifices herself for *kalon*, surely it would be odd to say that she chose the act of sacrifice in order to be visible and praiseworthy.

Lear appeals to concept (3), about pleasantness, to offer an explanation. Lear holds the view that *kalon* is pleasant because actions that are *kalon* are not those done out of necessity (which would be the case if one adopted a deontological interpretation of *kalon*). For instance, on the example of generous giving in 2.3.4.a, while Irwin would agree that the act of giving is fine on grounds that the act conforms to the deontological sense of morality, namely in benefitting others which does not directly contribute to an agent's *eudaimonia*, Lear suggests that the core of what makes generosity a virtue singled out for discussion by Aristotle in the terms of *kalon* is that it shows that the virtuous agent understands the proper place and use of money (i.e. an effective teleological order), which is using money to promote a good end (i.e. helping others). More interestingly, Lear observes that the virtuous agent would likely, upon understanding the proper place of money, find a sense of pleasant liberation (which eludes miserly people who hoard wealth out of fear and insecurity). Moreover, it is in this newfound knowledge that the virtuous agent comes to "delight in reason" (2006:131). It is the delight in reason that Lear situates the intrinsic value of *kalon* for "the delight the decent person feels in fine action is reason's joy in its successful grasp of practical truth" (2006:131).

Thus, returning to the question Lear raised in concept (2) concerning what makes the sacrifice of the dying soldier on the battlefield pleasant suggests that unlike the objects of appetite that

[90] Lear gives the examples of public honour (*NE* 1123b28) and how beauty depends on size (i.e. in terms of visibility) (*NE* 1123b5–9) (2006:123).

are a pleasure for our baser senses, *kalon* is concerned with the "delight for reason" that lies in the contemplative, which is in for Aristotle a godly activity, which "surpasses all others in blessedness" (*NE* 1178b8–23). In this sense, we can understand Lear to offer an account of *kalon* as an attractive concept, whose attraction is in fact underscored by the imperative of the truth. On this notion, the fine is not prudential (or strictly teleological but represents understanding of a teleological order) but intrinsic. In this way Lear retains the non-consequentialist and non-deontological character of the virtue-concepts in Aristotle's ethics.

Chapter Three: FCVE Virtue Theory

In this chapter, I present a reconstruction of Aristotle's virtue theory, which FCVE takes as its theoretical basis. In section one, I present a theoretical blueprint of the components of Aristotle's philosophical psychology[91] and their roles within Aristotle's virtue theory. In section two, I present Aristotle's account of the virtues, which comprises of character virtue (*ethike arete*) and intellectual virtue (*phronesis*) in the context of his moral psychology: "virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it" (*NE* 1106b37–1107a2). In section three, I consolidate Aristotle's virtue concepts to FCVE, describing the nature and workings of character virtue and intellectual virtue in moral judgments and right action.

One notable distinction between FCVE's account of virtue theory from recent prominent neo-Aristotelian approaches,[92] such as that of Russell's (2009) and Curzer's (2012), is that the latter do not take as central Aristotle's metaphysical biology – viz. the soul – in their interpretation of his moral psychology, which concerns the role of moral perception in decision-making.

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[91] Adkins (1989:428). I use the term 'philosophical psychology' here to emphasise that the soul, which features in Aristotle's account of virtue theory as moral psychology is a metaphysical biological concept. This emphasis serves to help bring out the distinction between the conventional use of the term 'moral psychology', which could be philosophical or empirical. However, once the concept has been introduced at the start of this chapter, I revert to the term 'moral psychology' in subsequent discussions of Aristotle's work on FCVE.

[92] By neo-Aristotelian, I mean more specifically virtue ethicists who subscribe to neo-Aristotelian naturalism of the kind, which derives normativity from biology (Foot, Hursthouse, Thompson). This is contrasted with FCVE's approach, which although is also neo-Aristotelian and subscribes to naturalism, it adopts Aristotle's metaphysical biology (in particular, the concepts of *ergon* and *telos*) in grounding the interpretation of his moral psychology. Therefore, unlike the afore mentioned neo-Aristotelian naturalists, FCVE's account does not shy away from appealing to Aristotle's account of the soul and its related concepts. See chapter 4.2.3 for further elucidation.

Driver offers a different kind of distinction between (FCVE's) Aristotelian and (Hursthouses') "broadly Aristotelian" (2006:109) or "modern Aristotelian" (206:111) approaches. The differences are, philosophers subscribing to the former group accept Aristotle's ideas wholesale, which may include outdated concepts, whereas philosophers subscribing to the latter group agree with the Aristotelian framework at large but reject elements in his ideas, which reflected the "prejudices that were rampant in Ancient Greece" (2006:111). While the prejudices referred to in Driver's text explicitly concerns Aristotle's view on slavery, my understanding is that these can be extended to further concepts deemed as outdated, such as the notion of soul or his views on the state (*polis*).

Differences in methodology manifest as interpretive differences, both normatively and metaethically. For example, by appealing to the Aristotelian soul, which posits the faculty of wish (*boulesis*), FCVE's account of *phronesis* grasps the true conception of the good via wish that enables the agent to make both the correct specification and evaluation of ends. Whereas for Russell, the function of *phronesis* concerns only the specification of ends and is not concerned with establishing the objectivity of moral judgements about right action.[93]

Similarly, FCVE assumes a different direction altogether in the reconstruction of Aristotle's virtue theory to neo-Aristotelian approaches such as Russell's and Curzer's, which focus on looking at how the ethical virtues are individuated in relation to the concept of *phronesis* or *eudaimonia*. FCVE's account is steeped in the concept of the soul and *hexeis*, such that the concept of *eudaimonia* cannot be understood separately from the virtues of the two parts of the soul on account of the human function (*telos*). This generates a value-loaded understanding of *eudaimonia*, which contrasts with typically neo-Aristotelian interpretations, that human flourishing relates to what is characteristically good for the agent.

It is in this way that FCVE's virtue theory is distinctive and, as I attempt to show, more robust in terms of its (i) roundedness as a normative theory, which as seen in chapter two can respond to objections of normative adequacy, (ii) ability to defend ethical objectivity on its metaethical foundation, which is discussed in chapter four, and (iii) moral psychology, which also finds support in empirical psychology, as discussed in chapter five.

[93] Nor does Russell seek to establish objectivity of moral judgements to his Aristotelian approach on a metaethical basis, concerning virtues' relation to hexeis in *eudaimonia*, which is a cornerstone in FCVE's understanding of virtue and its non-relativity.

3.1 Blueprint of Aristotle's Virtue Theory

It is notable that modern concepts of the 'moral' and 'right' are largely absent in Aristotle's ethical discussions.[94] Anscombe observes that "If someone professes to be expounding Aristotle and talks in a modern fashion about "moral" such-and-such, he must be very imperceptive if he does not constantly feel like someone whose jaws have somehow got out of alignment: the teeth don't come together in a proper bite" (1958: 2). Instead, the closest equivalent to the modern notions of morality and rightness is found in two concepts – that of the human good (*eudaimonia*) and the excellences (*aretai*) of human activities that constitute the good.[95] It is the latter concept of the excellences that determines the virtues, albeit based on *eudaimonia*.

A widely supported explanation for the differences between ancient and modern approaches to understanding the concept of 'morality' has been presented in chapter one: modern notions of morality adopt a legalistic conception, which may be in part the psychological remnant of a religious heritage.[96] On this religious approach, morality is understood in terms of 'imperatives' that entail duties or obligations reminiscent of the divine commandments. These religious influences are not present in ancient (and therefore by extension, Aristotle's) ethics. Instead, Aristotle's ethics presents an 'attractive' account of morality based on a conception of the good, *eudaimonia*. Aristotle believes that all men seek *eudaimonia* since it is the highest good achievable by action. Aristotle attributes two formal criteria to *eudaimonia*: 1) that it is

[94] As Annas (2018) notes, the terms *dei* and *chre* are the closest imperative terms that correspond to modern concepts of rightness, but these concepts are explicated by reference to the virtues as they appear in the doctrine of the mean, such as at the "right time, on the right occasion, toward the right people, for the right purpose and in the right manner" (*NE* 1106b15–29), which have to then be understood in terms of the virtues (based on *arete* and *eudaimonia*). Please refer to chapter two for the discussion of virtue ethics and right action.

[95] Human good (*eudaimonia*) is defined as "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue" (*NE* 1098a16–17), where the concept of virtue is understood as the unitary state of excellences that relate to both the non-rational and rational parts of the soul.

[96] See section 1.2.1 for Anscombe and 1.2.2 for Williams' understanding of the special force of morality.

the final good such that it is complete, i.e. chosen *for itself* (and not as an instrument for anything else) (*NE* 1097a28–1097b1), and 2) that it is self-sufficient, i.e. we choose it over all other goods because it lacks in nothing (*NE* 1097b14–15). *Eudaimonia* is neither a means to a further goal nor the component to a larger goal; *eudaimonia* is an end for all that we do in what is achievable by action.[97] Therefore, what grounds the notion of morality for Aristotle is our species-wide drive to pursue *eudaimonia* (however it may be individually conceived),[98] which provides the agent with motivation to act in accordance with its requirements.

In his search for a definition for *eudaimonia*, Aristotle identifies *eudaimonia* with the excellent performance of the human function: *eudaimonia* is "activity of soul exhibiting virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete " (*NE* 1098a16–18).[99] On this definition, one must possess the virtues in order to perform the human function well, through which one attains *eudaimonia*.[100] Aristotle gives the analogy of the lyre player to illustrate that merely exercising one's function is not sufficient to attain *eudaimonia*, just as there is a difference between a lyre-player and a *good* lyre-player; in order to be like the good

[97] For Aristotle, *eudaimonia* has a social dimension based on the understanding and that men are social creatures and that "man is born for citizenship" (*NE* 1097b11).

[98] For Aristotle, people tend to be mistaken about what *eudaimonia* consists in, i.e. they tend to have the wrong conception of *eudaimonia*, such that they 'go after' the wrong things. To have a wrong conception of *eudaimonia* means that the agent is not fully virtuous (in terms of her appetites and desires), although this does not preclude her from 'doing the right thing' whether it is under the guidance of a virtuous person or by following the morally right *endoxa*. It would nevertheless mean that what the agent finds pleasurable (i.e. desiring part of her soul) is not in alignment with what is good and virtuous, such that she is not undertaking the action 'as the virtuous person would' (i.e. in accordance with the pleasures associated with the understanding that the action is appropriate and good, because is it complete and self-sufficient).

[99] There is scholarly debate over the definition of *eudaimonia* offered in *NE* I (practical activity) and that in *NE* X (theoretical activity). While the main bulk of the Ethics is a study of *eudaimonia* as a practical activity, as the discussions on moral psychology suggest, we should not preclude that a happy life combines both practical and theoretical activities (Hughes, 2001:50). Additionally, I have included a brief discussion of '*kalon'* in 2.3.4.b, which includes an interpretation of what the contemplative means in our understanding of the virtues as beauty.

[100] The human good does not simply lie in the performance of our function but in the excellent performance of that function (*NE* 1098a10–11). See Scaltsas for a detailed discussion on the connection between the good performance of the human function and what is good for human beings: "What I am proposing is that we look at the way that reason functions for the determination of the naturally pleasant and be guided by reason's role there in understanding the way that reason functions in the determination of the human good with respect to the activities of the soul" (Scaltsas, 1996:300).

lyre-player, one must exercise one's function well (i.e. in accordance with the virtues) (*NE* 1098a8–16).

Aristotle has identified 'virtue proper' as the unitary state of both intellectual virtue (*dianoetike arete*; in particular, *phronesis*) and character virtue (*ethike arete*). His identification of there being two kinds of virtue pertains to the different function of the parts of the soul they occupy (*NE* I.13): intellectual virtues relate to the 'calculative or deliberative part' (*to logistikon*) (hereafter, 'deliberative part') of the rational soul (*to logon echon*),[101] whereas the moral virtues (*ethikai aretai*) relate to the 'appetitive and desiring part' (*orektikon* and *epithumetiko*) (hereafter, 'appetitive part') of the non-rational soul (*alogon*).[102]

Piecing the parts together, we can understand Aristotle as saying that the good that all activities in life should aim at are those which feature human excellences; by bringing out the excellences that pertain to the functions of our rational and non-rational soul (which together make up the function, *ergon*, of the human soul), we will achieve the most choice-worthy life. In Aristotle's ethics, *eudaimonia* consists in the excellent performance of the human function which is activity of the soul under the guidance of reason (Scaltsas, 1996:304). *Eudaimonia* thus fixes the target we should aim at in our actions, which we attain by performing the human function well. The excellent performance of the human function, i.e. rationality, secures "internal cohesion" (1996:304) among the two parts of the soul – i.e. the activities of the non-rational soul are guided by the rational soul – and this is constitutive of the final good, i.e. *eudaimonia*.[103]

[101] In *NE* VI, Aristotle explains that the thinking or rational part of the soul consists of the theoretical or scientific part and the calculative (or deliberative) part – "for to deliberate and to calculate are the same thing" (*NE* 1139a13).

[102] I will be using moral virtues and character virtues interchangeably, based on the interpretation that they are excellences pertaining to the *hexis* of the non-rational soul.

[103] This can be contrasted with a consequentialist view whereby virtues are valued for the *results* they bring about, rather than *because* its bringing about shows an excellence in the functioning of the soul.

These concepts all come together under Aristotle's function argument:

1. All things have an end (*telos*) which is determined by the thing's function (*ergon*).
2. To fulfill the *telos* of a human, a human would have to exercise her *ergon*.
3. The human could exercise her *ergon* well or badly. If the human exercises her ergon well, she has an excellence or virtue (*arete*), and if badly, she has a defect or vice (*kakia*).
4. *Eudaimonia* is achieved when the human exercises her *ergon* well (i.e. in accordance with virtue).
5. Virtue proper is a unitary state, comprising the intellectual virtues concerned with the deliberative part of the rational soul and the character virtues concerned with the appetitive part of the non-rational soul.
6. The function of the deliberative part of the rational soul is to deliberate on practical activities. To deliberate well is an excellence of this part; this gives rise to the virtue of practical wisdom (*phronesis*).
7. The appetitive part of the non-rational soul can listen to, and obey, reason. To listen to reason is for the *hexis* of the appetitive part to be well disposed, and thus is an excellence of its functioning. Excellence in this functioning is a moral virtue (*ethike arete*) concerned with choice (*prohairesis*) that 'lies in a mean relative to us'.
8. Thus, *eudaimonia* consists of activity in i) the deliberative part of rational soul exhibiting excellence, i.e. practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and ii) the appetitive part of the non-rational soul exhibiting excellence, i.e. moral virtue (*ethike arete*).

The above summary presents an outline of how the concepts of *telos, ergon, arete, hexis* and *eudaimonia* come together in Aristotle's virtue system. However, to understand how the intellectual and character virtues interact, we need to further examine Aristotle's philosophical psychology.

3.2 Aristotle's Philosophical Psychology and Virtue Theory

In this section I present an account of the theoretical structure of Aristotle's virtue theory that forms part of his philosophical psychology. Firstly, I show how the concepts of character disposition (*hexis),* choice (*prohairesis*), and deliberation (*bouleusis*) interact in the formation of moral judgement and subsequent moral action. Furthermore, I discuss how they relate to the two kinds of virtue, moral virtue (*ethike arete*) and intellectual virtue (*phronesis*). This structure brings together the main components that compose Aristotle's definition of virtue "virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it" (*NE* 1106b37–1107a2). Secondly, I show how the two kinds of virtue relate in the attainment of *eudaimonia*.

3.2.1 Aristotle's Division of the Soul

I start with the rational soul (*to logon echon*) in 3.2.1a, focusing on the interaction between deliberation (*bouleusis*), choice (*prohairesis*), and action, and then turn to the appetitive part of the non-rational soul (*orektikon* and *epithumetikon*) that partakes in reason in 3.2.1b.

a. The Rational Soul

The rational soul subdivides into the contemplative or scientific (*epistemonikon*) part which aims at the discovery of necessary truths about the universe, and the deliberative (*logistikon*) part which aims at grasping "action-related truths" (Reeve, 2006:198), i.e. "truth corresponding with right desire" (*NE* 1139a30).[104] The deliberative part pertains to ethics because deliberation is concerned with solving practical problems and ethics is concerned with practical activity.

[104] Broadie (1991:224) explains that when we grasp a practical truth, we in effect identify the best course of action to take in a situation by deliberating well. 'Right desire' here refers to the correct kinds of desire that is "effective in producing appropriate action" (Reeve, 2006:198).

For instance, deliberation helps to address what one should do in a situation – such as when faced with an ethical dilemma. Aristotle points out that the main function of the deliberative part is to deliberate about "things that are in our power and can be done" (*NE* 1112a31). Deliberation is reasoning which seeks to bring about some fixed end or goal that is achievable in action (*NE* 1112a20–b12), such as when doctors deliberate about what the best course of treatment is to prescribe in order to bring about the fixed end of health; but whether health is the fixed end or not is something she does not deliberate about (*NE* 1112b12–13). The deliberative process takes the form of a practical syllogism, where working from the basis of major premises (statements concerning universals) and minor premises (statements concerning particular beliefs) lead to prescriptive conclusions that state what should be done.[105] Borrowing from Aristotle's example of healthy diets (*NE* 1141b18–22), the process of deliberation starts with the knowledge of a universal (the major premise):

1. Light meats are (digestible and) wholesome (*NE* 1141b19).

Then, the deliberative process is informed by a particular belief (the minor premise):

2. Chicken is light meat.

It follows that:

3. Chicken is wholesome (*NE* 1141b21–22).

Aristotle explains that deliberation ends with a choice (*prohairesis*; viz. deliberational desire that forms the decision),[106] for "when we have reached a judgement as a result of deliberation,

[105] See commentary from Reeve (2006) and Hughes (2001). In this way, deliberation involves assessing how to achieve some end (*NE* 1142b15; 1142b23).

[106] "Choice, *prohairesis*, is a getting (*hairesis*) of one thing – the means – in place of (*pro*) another thing, the end" (Callard, 2020:135).

we desire in accordance with our deliberation" (*NE* 1113a10–12).[107] Aristotelian deliberation and choice are not neutral, for deliberation is based on fixed ends such that the agent 'works backwards' (Callard, 2020:127) deliberating on the means *from* the ends, and in doing so the deliberative conclusion (3) has motivational and prescriptive force giving rise to (4):

4. I *should* eat chicken because it is wholesome.

The prescriptive force of Aristotelian deliberation derives from the fact that it is part of the workings of practical intellect, i.e. deliberation is thinking "for the sake of something and practical" *NE* 1139b1); in comparison, theoretical thinking by itself does not aim at or bring about action (*NE* 1139b1).[108] In particular, Reeve explains that the Aristotelian deliberative process generates a prescription because reason contains a natural impulse towards the good (2006:205–6). Aristotle identifies this impulse as 'wish' (*boulesis*; *NE* III.4), which is the rational desire for *eudaimonia* and its constituents; when wish is in good condition, it is desire for things that are truly good. Thus, wish does not "have a single object, namely, the ultimate good (happiness)" but "takes as its object things that are really good" (Pakaluk, 2005:141).

Hence, in our example, the agent desires healthy foods because she has a *wish* for health and believes that eating healthy foods is the means to bring about the good of health. What motivates the agent's choice for light meat is not hunger or gastronomic preference, but rather the rational desire for healthy foods informed by her wish for health; if she believes that light meat is healthy, the agent will choose light meat as a means to achieve her wish (desired end)

[107] Choice, says Aristotle, is a "deliberational desire for things that depend on us" (it is desire informed by deliberation; *NE* 1113a12).

[108] "Thought by itself sets nothing in motion; thought that sets in motion is for the sake of something and practical" (*NE* 1139a37–b1; also *DA* 433a6–8; 433a17–19).

for health (*NE* 1113a10–12).[109] In this way, deliberation is informed by the agent's rational desire (wish) for healthy food and converts the agent's hunger, which is the desire to eat meat, into choice (*prohairesis*), which is the desire for the means to attaining the end. In Aristotle's terms, choice is the "efficient cause of action" (*NE* 1139a31–32) because it brings together a desire for an end with the reasoned desire about how best to achieve that end (*NE* 1139a23–26).

Aristotelian deliberation is, therefore, not 'value-free' indiscriminate thinking because deliberative thinking is guided by a rational desire for what the person deems as good, which informs the appetitive part and enables a more discerning choice of means in the pursuit of ends.[110] Hence, it stands to reason that Aristotelian deliberation has not only an instrumental but also an evaluative function: it involves an informed, rational evaluation of the relative merits of options in the light of wish.[111] This becomes clearer once we consider the evaluative aspects of *phronesis* in section 3.2.2. Having explained the structure and function of the deliberative part of the rational soul – the basis of phronesis – I turn to the account of the non-rational soul – the basis of moral virtue.

b. The Non-Rational Soul

In *NE* I.13 Aristotle subdivides the non-rational part of the soul into two parts: 1) the vegetative part, which regulates nutrition and growth, and 2) the appetitive part (*orektikon* and

[109] Desire for *eudaimonia*-promoting food results from wish (*boulesis*), i.e. reason's own impulse or rational desire for the good (*eudaimonia*), that arises whenever reason tries to find out what is the best thing to do or how to do it (*NE* III.4; 1113a15–31).

[110] In contrast, Humean reasoning does not discriminate among desires qualitatively, which makes it merely instrumental. In Aristotelian deliberation, agents deliberate in relation to the fixed end that is *eudaimonia*. Thus, in successful deliberation, the agent should not only secure the object of deliberation (i.e. means towards ends) but also to do so through a 'derivational procedure' that ensures the object of deliberation remains constitutive of *eudaimonia* thereby retaining its ethical status of goodness (Callard, 2020:137).

[111] Deliberation enables us to select the means that bring about the outcome "most easily and best", says Aristotle (*NE* 1112b17–17).

epithumetikon), which is the seat of the passions. The crucial difference between the two subdivisions of the non-rational soul is that the appetitive part partakes or "shares in reason" (*NE* 1102b13), whereas the vegetative part does not partake in reason at all (*NE* 1102b29–1103a3). It is the appetitive part and its excellent functioning that is the subject of Aristotle's inquiry into moral virtue and the good. Aristotle identifies moral virtue as excellence of the appetitive part of the soul because it pertains to whether one manages the activities of the appetitive part well or badly, which is what makes an agent ethically good or bad.[112] Since the appetitive part shares in reason, the agent can appeal to reason to influence, shape, and guide it.[113] In this way, it is possible to hold one responsible for one's character in terms of moral virtues or vices, and subsequently attribute praise or blame to the actions which issue from these character states. By way of contrast, the moral virtues do not pertain to the vegetative part of the soul for the latter has to do with our bodily functions, which are not only common to all living things but also seem to function most in our sleep and, therefore, are not something we have conscious and rational control over. Aristotle therefore rules out the vegetative part as something an agent can be held responsible for in the manner of being praised or blamed.

Aristotle's division of the soul is significant, for the inquiry of an agent's character disposition founded on his distinct moral psychology that includes the *hexeis*, intellect, and *eudaimonia*, provides the central distinguishing concept that sets contemporary virtue ethics apart from the moral theories of consequentialism and deontology. Moreover, while *eudaimonia* is a concept widely agreed to among ancient philosophers, it is perhaps the different ways in which virtue

[112] If we perform the activities of the non-rational part well, i.e. in accordance with reason, it follows that we perform the human *ergon* well, for which we are ethically good. In the same vein, we are bad when we fail to perform the activities of the non-rational well, i.e. we fail to manage our appetites in accordance with reason. *Eudaimonia* is a harmonic state of the two parts of the soul.

[113] Since the appetitive part of the non-rational soul does not itself reason, Aristotle surmises that the shaping of the appetitive part cannot be through reasoned arguments alone (*logoi*): "the former will not be made well in soul be such a course of philosophy" (*NE* 1105b18). Nevertheless, since the appetitive part is amenable to and follows reason, it is possible to shape it by instilling good habits (*ethos*) that come to shape a person's character dispositions (*hexeis*) through the process of habituation (*ethismos*).

is discussed in relation to the soul that most provides a most helpful contrast between Aristotle and his predecessors, specifically Socrates and Plato.

In contrast to the Platonic approach, Aristotle eschews the more intellectualist understanding of virtue, which supports the view that 'virtue is knowledge', viz. one who knows that X is good (has justified true beliefs) is *ipso facto* motivated to do X; vice is held to be the absence of knowledge.[114] Plato's account of virtue in his later dialogues, most notably the *Republic*, moves away from the earlier intellectualist understanding of virtue as can be evidenced in his discussion on the division of the soul, where the appetitive and spirited parts of the soul can overcome the rational part. This demonstrates that moral judgement and virtue are not purely intellectual, for one might know that X is good but be overcome by conflicting desire and therefore fail to do X. Nevertheless, Plato's account of the virtues is still considered rationalist because he allows that one can be a virtuous person if one knows that X is good via intellect and does x even when the non-rational parts of one's soul do not harmonise with the rational part. That is, the virtuous person is someone who has true beliefs about the good and self-control, viz. the ability to control the desires that conflict with the beliefs of the intellect. On this account, while it would be desirable for the non-rational parts of the soul to harmonise with the rational part in moral judgment, they are not in themselves central to Plato's account of virtue (Mason, 2010); what is most important is for one's rational part to govern the non-rational parts in terms of self-control.

On Aristotle's account of the soul, the appetitive part while is amenable to reason cannot be governed by reason necessarily. Rather, the appetitive part of the non-rational soul obeys

[114] Plato's claim that 'virtue is knowledge' (justified true belief) appears in the *Apology*, *Protagoras*, *Meno* and *Gorgias* (for a commentary see Pangle, 2014), the collection of work known as the 'Socratic Dialogues'. Although in the later dialogues, most notably in the *Republic*, Plato offers a more nuanced account of the virtues, where it is possible to consider one as virtuous if one has true beliefs about the good. See Mason (2010) for further elucidation.

reason *only if* it has become amenable to reason by habituation.[115] Given this communication relationship, as Sherman observes, the appetitive responses (i.e. desires and emotions) are also valid models of moral responses, thus marking a departure from an exclusively intellectualist approach to the understanding of moral philosophy and moral psychology (1989:2). This shift affects our understanding of the virtues and places the affective considerations of an agent's character at the center of virtue ethical moral theories. Adopting this affective shift has also changed our understanding in terms of how agents come to acquire the virtues, which in Aristotle's case is learning by 'doing' as opposed to the contrasting views that lean heavily on theoretical learning or moral knowledge, rules, and principles.

In summary, the distinctive marks of Aristotle's philosophical psychology are as follows: (a) the appetitive part of the non-rational soul shares in reason (i.e. that it is communicative and collaborative); (b) deliberation is both prescriptive and evaluative in the sense that reason has a view of the good, which helps us choose means in light of that evaluation; and (c) deliberation enables one to consider whether one is "aiming at the right things in life" (Hughes, 2001:103) by evaluating one's intermediate ends in accordance with *eudaimonia*, the good "at which all things aim" (*NE* 1094a3). In the next section, I expand on the notion of excellence in deliberation, *phronesis*.

3.2.2 Intellectual Virtue: Phronesis

For Aristotle, *phronesis* (practical wisdom) is excellence in deliberation, where deliberation is thinking that seeks to bring about or satisfy certain (fixed) ends (*NE* 1112b11–12). Excellence

[115] 'Virtue proper' refers to the unitary state of both ethical and intellectual virtue. Here, my primary focus is to show that Aristotle's account of moral psychology, in which the appetitive part of the soul (hence character dispositions, viz. *hexeis*) plays a key role, differs from Plato's intellectualist account in terms of how the appetitive parts of the soul are understood.

in deliberation typically results in excellence of action in the domain of practical activity,[116] which is the central subject of ethics (*NE* I.6–1.7). Excellence of action is what contemporary interpretations of Aristotelian ethics refer to as virtuous actions (i.e. right actions). Aristotle defines virtuous action as the outcome of a deliberative process guided by both character virtue and *phronesis*, where "virtue makes the goal right, practical wisdom the things leading to it" (*NE* 1144a8–9). This suggests a clear division of labour in terms of the appetitive and the deliberative parts of the soul. The reading that *phronesis* concerns excellence in means-only reasoning is further supported by Aristotle's account of choice, which suggests that deliberation starts from the fixed end of *eudaimonia* and its work consists in finding the means that promote the fixed end, which results in a choice (*NE* 1111b26–29; 1112a15–16).[117] The means-only reading, then, is that if the appetitive part determines the ends, and deliberation follows once the ends have been set, then deliberation does not participate in setting the end; hence, deliberation is restricted to a means-only role.[118]

However, earlier we saw that deliberative thinking involves an evaluative function as well, for good deliberation works to preserve the goodness of the means by assessing them in accordance with the requirements of *eudaimonia*. The source of our ends may be the appetitive part of the soul, but this does not preclude i) that we can use deliberation to evaluate which means and ends to pursue among competing means and ends, or ii) that we can use deliberation in order to make sense and coordinate the intermediate ends that are constitutive of the final end,

[116] This is 'typically' so, in the sense that there may be factors outside of one's immediate control that impede the performance of moral actions, factors including moral luck.

[117] Callard identifies Aristotelian deliberation as an 'asymmetrical' mode of reasoning that follows a certain order and direction; "it moves backwards from the end to the action" (2020:135). She contrasts this with Humean deliberation, which she identifies as 'symmetrical' for she takes Hume's reasoning as a form of probabilistic reasoning about cause and effect which could be undertaken without "any desire for the end, and without being in a position to supply means" (2020 :135).

[118] This interpretation suggests similarities between Aristotle's deliberative account where the appetitive soul sets the end with the deliberative soul engaging in means-end reasoning to attain the end, with Hume's deliberative account where "reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions" (Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, (II.3.3 415)).

eudaimonia. For example, my appetites may lead me to pursue a number of goods such as friendship, fame, and fortune. While the means-end function of deliberation is to help me determine how to achieve these ends, some ends might conflict with others, e.g. I achieve fame at the cost of betraying my friends, or I acquire vast fortunes at the cost of my health. In such instances, the intermediate ends would not be useful for me in my overall pursuit of *eudaimonia*, which makes them lose their goodness.

Goodness derives from how the object or end stands in relation to *eudaimonia*; what makes something good depends on whether it contributes to *eudaimonia* or is constitutive of *eudaimonia*. For example, external goods such as wealth are good in so far as they are conducive to an agent's *eudaimonia*, such as enabling the agent to help others. For this reason, Aristotle maintains that vicious agents cannot deliberate well (i.e. achieve excellence in deliberation) since vice impedes the grasp of the good and, hence, misdirects the ensuing deliberation. Even the attainment of goods "which taken absolutely are always good" (*NE* 1129b3), such as health or wealth, may not be good for vicious agents (i.e. these objects do not retain the ethical status of goodness *for* the vicious agent because they are not conducive to the agent's *eudaimonia*) (*NE* 1129b2–8). This suggests that deliberation does not just concern the attainment of ends but relate to i) how these ends feature in the agent's overall *eudaimonia*, as well as ii) how they are obtained (whether the intermediate ends were acquired though acts that retain their ethical status or otherwise) (Callard, 2020:138).[119] The *phronimos* therefore is someone who is "able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in

[119] This follows from the view that all ends are intermediate ends, in the sense that they are either intrinsic components of *eudaimonia* or external instruments to some higher end, which is *eudaimonia* (see e.g. Cooper, 1986:14–18; Wiggins, 1980:224; Reeve, 2006; Hughes, 2013). Whether something is an end or a means to a further end depends on the context (Cooper, 1986:15). For example, we may deliberate whether oratory or medicine is constitutive of some further end – e.g. as profitable or fulfilling professions – or a good life more generally. But we cannot deliberate about the end of medicine as such, viz. the fixed end of medicine which is to heal. When the end of medicine is considered as such (as ultimate), it is not an object of deliberation, in the same way that *eudaimonia* is not an object of deliberation.

some particular respect, e.g. about what sorts of thing conduce to health or to strength, but about what sorts of thing conduce to the good life in general" (NE 1140a25–28).

Having a correct grasp of good ends entails the skill of being able to recognise particular acts as instances of relevant universals (*NE* 1142a23–30). According to Rabinoff, *phronesis* is "not simply the activity of practical reason, but also the condition for it" (2018:118). Without intellectual grasp of good ends (i.e. the universals that serve as the major premises in practical syllogism), one cannot be a good deliberator (*NE* 1139b1–4; 1142b31–33) because one would not be able to identify what different situations are instances of and what kinds of response they demand. To deliberate well is to know how to exercise the virtues as circumstances require: in the case of generosity, it is a matter of knowing the when, what, how, and toward whom generosity is best actualised. For example, being generous to a child might entail giving her a sense of love and support by showing up at her school performances rather than giving her an expensive piece of jewelry; in the same vein, sometimes being kind to a friend entails telling her a painful truth rather than pleasing her by turning a blind eye to some of her bad life choices. *Phronesis*, practical wisdom, is thus a matter of seeing the "morally relevant occasions for action, and then knowing what to do" (Sherman, 1999:35).

The initial division of labour between character and intellectual virtue nevertheless underlies the important and distinctive Aristotelian doctrine, which holds that virtues primarily concern the agent's affective dispositions (i.e. whether her *hexis* is well or badly disposed in relation to her appetites). This is because *eudaimonia* is "determined by our function or essence…[and] it does not admit of being otherwise" (Reeve, 2006:205); hence, the nature of *eudaimonia* falls under the category of things we cannot deliberate about (*NE* III.3).[120] Since we cannot

[120] However, there is a different sense in which we can deliberate about *eudaimonia*: we can first "deliberate about constitutive means, and, second, to engage in dialectical clarification of what happiness actually is" (Reeve, 2006:206).

deliberate 'directly' about *eudaimonia*, but only indirectly by evaluating ends that are constitutive of it, this is why Aristotle maintains that arguments alone cannot make men good (*NE* 1179b1–31). In order for one's *boulesis* (wish) to aim at the right ends, the *hexeis* of one's soul must have developed properly from early youth and therefore stands in good condition with regards to the appetites; otherwise, one cannot deliberate well and grasp what is genuinely good (Pakaluk, 2005:141–42).

3.2.3 Moral Virtue: The *Hexeis*

Since the genus of moral virtue is that it is a *hexis* of the non-rational soul (i.e. a disposition or state of character) and its species is that of a *hexis prohairetike* (i.e state of character concerned with choice), I will focus on first explaining the notion of *hexeis* and then explain how they are concerned with choice (*hexis prohairetike*). Aristotle explains that the *hexeis* are one among the three things to be found in the non-rational soul: passions (*pathe*), capacities (*dynameis*) and dispositions (*hexeis*) (*NE* II.5). The *hexeis* are morally relevant because virtue is a *hexis prohairetike*, i.e. it is a state which enables us to rationally control how to feel the passions, whether too much or too little, and how to act by appealing to reason. The *hexeis* reflect whether one stands in good or ill condition to both one's appetites and reasoning (because they are reason-responsive); hence, *hexeis* are subject to moral attributions. In contrast, passions and capacities themselves are things that 'happen' to the agent; hence, one does not attribute praise or blame to them.[121]

According to Aristotle, a *hexis* is neither a passion nor a capacity (*NE* 1105b19–1106a11). Passions (*pathe*) pertain to feelings that affect the soul and are accompanied by pleasure or

pain, such as "anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling" (*NE* 1105b21–23). Natural capacities (*dynameis*) refer to the things in virtue of which one is capable to feel the passions, such as being able to become angry or becoming pained (*NE* 1105b24–25).

Aristotle defines a human *hexis* as the kind of thing in virtue of which one is well or badly disposed with reference to one's passions (*NE* 1105b25–29; Taylor, 2006:96–7). For example, one would be badly disposed to one's passions if one feels too much anger such that one's passions become violent, or too little anger such that one's passions are meek; feeling anger in an intermediate way such that it 'hits the mean' would be the mark of being well disposed with reference to one's passions.

Most commentators of Aristotle's ethics agree that the *hexeis* are stable, unchanging and long-lasting dispositions that cause something to perform its function well or badly, and hence they bring the thing forth in either a good or bad condition (Hutchinson, 1986:38). For Aristotle, virtue is an excellence of *hexis* which:

> both brings into good condition the thing of which it is the excellence and makes the work of that thing be done well; e.g. the excellence of the eye makes both the eye and its work good; for it is by the excellence of the eye that we see well. (*NE* 1106a16–19)

We can now make better sense of why the virtues put us in good condition and enable us to perform our *ergon* well. According to Aristotle's function argument,[122] we are good *qua* human beings if we have the traits that enable us to live in accordance with the essential human characteristic, i.e. the ability to feel and act under the guidance of reason.[123] Bad *hexeis* are

[122] The function argument can be found in *NE* 1097b25–1098a17.

[123] Rationality is understood as something that characteristically distinguishes human beings from animals. While some remain unconvinced that rationality belongs exclusively to the domain of human beings and suggest that animals also have a degree of rationality, it could be argued that insofar as we are aware, rationality belonging to animals does not fall under the 'higher' sense of rationality that human beings possess, which include the ability to reflect or introspect.

vices (such as intemperance) that disrupt our ability to guide our emotions, appetites, and actions by reason. Since our *hexeis* affect how we respond to our appetites and feelings (i.e. whether we are blinded by our passions or whether we can see clearly through them and respond accordingly), and subsequently how they interact with reason, the *hexeis* play an important role in whether we perform our *ergon* well or badly.

Aristotle explains that in relation to hitting the target of *eudaimonia*, there are many ways to have the wrong affective responses: "fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well" (*NE* 1106b18–20). This consequently can affect our actions, for in actions there are also excess, defect, and the intermediate (*NE* 1106b24–25). Therefore, if we stand well with regards to our passions, we will be able to act well and attain excellence in practical activity, which is virtuous action. For example, in the face of danger, feeling the right amount of fear would lead us to be cautious of the danger while facing up to the situation, this can be considered brave; feeling excessive fear might cause us to cower and flee, whereas feeling too little fear might cause us to act brutishly, neither of which show excellence of action.

In order for us to stand well in relation to our passions (i.e. feel the right amount of passion for something, in accordance with correct reason), we need to take pleasure in the right kinds of things (i.e. those conducive to *eudaimonia*) and to dislike the wrong kinds of things (*NE* 1104b10–25). The *hexeis* are thus concerned with how we stand in relation to pleasures and pains, which are the functions of the appetitive part of the soul:

> moral virtue is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of the pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of the pain that we abstain from noble ones….Every passion and every action is accompanied by pleasure and pain, for this reason also virtue will be concerned with pleasures and pains…[I]t is by reason of pleasures and pains

> that men become bad, by pursuing and avoiding these—either the pleasures and pains they ought not or when they ought not or as they ought not, or by going wrong in one of the other similar ways that may be distinguished. (*NE* 1104b9–24)

Aristotle's point seems to be that *eudaimonia* depends on whether we take pleasure or pain in the things that we ought to. This provides the conceptual link between *eudaimonia* (i.e. living the flourishing life) and ethics (i.e. doing well and being good): our *hexeis* dispose us to find pleasure or pain in proper or improper things. This makes a huge ethical difference: our *hexeis*, being dispositions to have likes and dislikes for certain things, determine whether we live flourishing or decadent lives. In short, the 'guise of the good' depends on the condition of the *hexeis*, which influences our ethical choices (e.g., Sherman, 1989).[124] As Aristotle observes:

> different things appear good to different people … For each state of character has its own ideas of the noble and the pleasant…In most things the error seems to be due to pleasure; for this appears a good when it is not. (*NE* 1113a22–35)

Therefore, Aristotle emphasises the importance of training our sensitivities through habituation, such that we come to like the right kinds of things as 'second nature'. If we are badly disposed with reference to our appetites, we are likely to make choices that miss the mean because we mistake the bad for good. For example, we may become overly attached to material possessions or insufficiently appreciative of our family and friends.

A further attribute of the *hexeis* is that they are amenable to reason, i.e. they are reason-responsive and enable us to act on choice. A *hexis* is a disposition to choose courses of conduct

[124] By 'guise of the good' I refer to Aristotle's idea that one's character determines how the good appears to that person (*NE* 1113a22–35). Sherman argues that emotional dispositions determine moral perception: "a sense of indignation makes us sensitive to those who suffer unwarranted insult or injury, just as a sense of pity and compassion opens our eyes to the pains of sudden and cruel misfortune …We notice through feeling what might otherwise go unheeded by a cool and detached intellect. To see dispassionately without engaging the emotions is often to be at peril of missing what is relevant" (1989:45).

in light of our conception of the good and general goals (Hutchinson, 1986:95). The *hexeis* are concerned with choice in the sense that the agent's character is not a cluster of jostling dispositions that pushes her to act at random. Rather, *hexis* is a stable disposition that includes her preferences and sensitivities such that the choices she makes are in line with what she finds pleasurable or painful and in light of a coherent conception of *eudaimonia*. In general, when we genuinely choose something, we choose it because we value it for what it is; choice disposes us to act "in light of our goals or ideals" (Hutchinson, 1986:100; Sherman, 1989:79). It is in this way that agents can be held accountable for their choices and actions such that we can attribute praise and blame. This also shows that Aristotle's developed account of the virtues differs from the 'natural virtues' found in children (*NE* 1144b8–10), who have not yet been habituated (i.e. their *hexeis* have not yet become firm and amenable to reason's prescriptions) – for acting on impulse or urge is not the same as acting from choice.[125]

To recapitulate, the functions of the *hexeis* and their relation to moral virtue can be summarised as follows (Hutchinson, 1986):

1. A hexis is a disposition that makes us perform our function (*ergon*) well or badly.
2. A *hexis* is a disposition to feel an emotion in a good or a bad way; e.g. "with reference to anger we stand badly if we feel it violently or too weakly, and well if we feel it in an intermediate way" (*NE* 1105b27–28).
3. A *hexis* is a disposition to desire certain objects or ends; a person desires the right or wrong things in virtue of her dispositions.

[125] Aristotle's view is not that *only* conscious deliberation generates genuine moral choice – we may not have the time or the resources to deliberate on a matter and thus we often have to, and do, act 'automatically' (i.e. without consciously working out what to do). A virtuous agent acts well 'automatically' in the sense that acting in accordance with virtue is a default position for her, since her appetites and desires are aligned with *eudaimonia*. Upon seeing a child trip over and fall, the virtuous agent does not have to think about how to approach the child, in what tone to speak to the child and what words to say to the child – she does so in line with her habituated pains and pleasures.

4. A *hexis* is a disposition of conduct; it disposes us to like the right activities or dislike the wrong activities.
5. A *hexis* is a disposition to choose certain courses of conduct in light of reason (Hutchinson, 1986:95–100).

Having given an account of what intellectual virtue (*phronesis*) and moral virtues (*ethikai aretai*) are, I turn to discuss how they interact and give rise to virtue proper, which is the unitary state of character and intellectual virtue.

3.3 Moral Psychology of Aristotle's Virtue Theory

In this section I explain how the Aristotelian notions of *hexis* and *phronesis* come together and mark a distinctive approach in Aristotle's theory of virtue, which involves the interplay between affective and deliberative components of the agent. This combination forms the basis of Aristotelian moral psychology. I will argue that contemporary non-Aristotelian virtue theories do not address how virtue enables us to deal with the context-sensitivity of moral judgments, whereas the Aristotelian conception of virtue emphasises the role of moral perception in helping us deal with moral ambiguity.[126]

3.3.1 Aristotelian Character Virtue vs. Modern Character Virtue

At the start of the *NE*, Aristotle observes that everyone ("the general run of men and people of superior refinement" [*NE* 1095a18]) agrees that *eudaimonia* is the highest good. Since humans have an innate desire for *eudaimonia* and virtue is the way to achieve it, it seems to follow that *eudaimonia* provides the primary normative justification for agents to become virtuous.

[126] In chapter five, I argue that Aristotelian ethical perception is better off without the perceptual metaphor because it is at odds with empirical accounts of moral sensitivity and creates a number of epistemological difficulties. I suggest that we replace moral perception with the broader capacity of evaluative sensibility (ES). ES pertains to the ability to recognise the moral salience in actions, characters, decisions, situations, and consequences.

However, I argue that virtues cannot be understood properly on this top-down approach, for such an approach very much still bears the hallmarks of an instrumentalist approach to understanding virtue. In modern accounts of virtue ethics, although character virtue is understood as a character trait (disposition), it is not further understood in Aristotelian terms as reason-responsive dispositions concerned with choice. As Annas explains, "Virtues, then, are dispositions or what are called in psychology character traits" (2003:2). A number of philosophers and psychologists alike have on occasion misunderstood the notion of character traits as cross-situationally stable or reliable dispositions to do certain things, and claim that character traits do not causally explain action.[127] In particular, they assume that behavioral inconsistency across a variety of trait-relevant situations is explained by the fact that humans lack stable character traits; hence, the virtues – which are supposed to be stable character traits – are not psychologically possible, according to them. These critics dismiss the possibility of virtuous character traits because they ignore that Aristotelian virtues are not cross-situationally consistent behavioral traits (i.e. that an agent *always* becomes hungry upon smelling baked bread), but reason-responsive and context-sensitive patterns of feeling, desiring, interpreting, choosing, and acting. For Aristotle, what counts as an act of justice or kindness differs across situations; for example, kindness might be expressed as either the giving or withholding of things.

In the place of the conditioned behavioral view of virtue, I present an alternative view of Aristotle's virtuous agent as someone who acts from a state of character concerned with choice (*prohairesis*), such that the acts chosen by the agent are chosen for the sake of the good. Critics of Aristotelian virtue misattribute to Aristotle a modern conception of character as stable behavioral traits that influence how an agent acts, whereas Aristotle holds that character

[127] See, for example, Doris (2002) who has championed the situationist challenge against virtue ethics.

dispositions (*hexeis*) are concerned with how the agent is disposed to pains and pleasures. At the very basic level these refer to our affective responses; whether we flinch at the thought of harming defenceless animals or find pleasure in watching violent and graphic images gives some inkling of the kinds of things we are affectively attracted to. The idea is that since the *hexeis* are *prohairetike*, they enable us to make choices in our actions and to choose those that hit the mean based on phronesis. Moral virtue disposes us to the right ends (what is ethically good) and correct reason enables us to wish for them by finding out how to achieve these ends in practical activity.

Modern conceptions of character ignore that Aristotelian virtues and vices such as kindness, generosity, cruelty, or stinginess are *instances* of excellence or defect of an agent's affective response and reasoning that are appropriate or inappropriate to the situation, such that what the agent does is considered virtuous or vicious, as opposed to mere conditioned behavioural responses. Hence, the moderns miss out on an important aspect of Aristotelian virtue: its ability to generate appropriate responses, that deal with the context-sensitivity and ambiguity of ethical truths. Having explained the theoretical structure of virtue, I now proceed to show how the virtuous *hexeis* and *phronesis* become manifest in the virtuous agent's moral judgment which requires i) moral perception and ii) good moral reasoning.

3.3.2 Full Virtue and Virtuous Action

In this subsection I present how the virtues and virtuous action relate to the doctrine of the mean. According to Aristotle's doctrine of the mean:

> Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. (*NE* 1106b36–1107a2)

In addition, the following passage summarises the conditions of virtuous action:

> If the acts that are in accordance with the virtues have themselves a certain character it does not follow that they are done justly or temperately. The agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. (NE 1105a30–34)

Following the definition, virtuous action is 'what the virtuous person does' in the sense that what the virtuous person characteristically does entails the following three components:

1. The knowledge condition: the virtuous agent must act *knowingly*, i.e. she must know i) what she is doing (i.e. the 'that') and ii) why is she doing it (i.e. the 'because).
2. The choice condition: the virtuous agent must i) choose her act (as opposed to acting unthinkingly or from impulse), and ii) choose her act for its sake (as opposed to acting on ulterior motives).
3. The character condition: the virtuous person must act from a firm disposition D, indicating that i) she takes pleasure in act-X such that ii) she would choose acts which issue from the same universals of which act-X is an instance, in other circumstances (on account of D).

a. Reciprocity of Virtue

The reciprocal relationship between character virtue and intellectual virtue is explained as follows: "it is not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, or practically wise without moral virtue" (*NE* 1144b30–32). In this way, virtue proper is the unitary state of both character and intellectual virtue. Reciprocity of virtue marks Aristotelian virtue theory apart from other virtue theories, for it insists on the close cooperation of the two parts that come

to form virtue proper, which makes it neither an intellectualist account (i.e. virtue is a function of the rational soul) nor an emotivist account (i.e. virtue is a function of the affective soul) of virtue. On the Aristotelian account of virtue, intellectual virtue and character virtue presuppose one another.

On the one hand, Aristotle maintains that someone who has good *hexis* but lacks *phronesis* is like a "blind person stumbling toward what she thinks is good but causing harm instead" (*NE* 1144b8–12) for *phronesis* is knowledge or correct accounts (*orthos logos*) of why acts are virtuous (Moss, 2014). *Phronesis* gives direction and guidance to character virtue because it has the supposition of the true good: *phronesis* "is a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man" (*NE* 1140b4–6). Character virtue ensures that the agent aims at a good goal – one aims at acting generously because one is generous (Callard, 2020). However, merely desiring or aiming at the good is not enough; in order to bring about virtuous action, one needs to find out the mean in the situation. The work of *phronesis* is therefore to determine the mean in one's actions with regards to doing things in light of a correct grasp of the good such that actions are done "to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, *that* is not for everyone" (*NE* 1109a25–30).

At the same time, Aristotle is keen to downplay the role of reason in his account in order to emphasise the collaborative relation between character and intellectual virtues. He explains that while virtue proper *involves* reason, it is nevertheless not a pure instance of reason (*NE* 1144b25–30). Aristotle insists that a person whose *hexeis* are not well disposed, would be unable to deliberate well, for without good *hexeis*, ethical thinking can be clouded.[128] To do its

[128] The discussion on evaluative sensibility (ES) in chapter five follows this thread of thought: that bad emotions (i.e. the *hexeis* which stand in bad condition to appetites) can distort moral perception such that the agent is misled in her moral response and beliefs.

work well, reason must have the supposition of the true end based on the good condition of *boulesis* (wish); this requires the contribution of good *hexeis*. A bad person can deliberate (calculate) well about how to secure wealth but without character virtue (such as justice), his thinking can be led wayward by greed (*pleonexia*), which would not result in actions that are constitutive of *eudaimonia*:

> suppose he [someone] lacks the virtue of temperance, so that his appetites for such things as food, drink, or sex, are not in a mean. Then his hunger for the fat-saturated, unhealthy Big Mac may be stronger than his wish for the lean and healthy bird meat. If so, he will succumb to akrasia and not act as he should. (Reeve, 2006: 204)

As Pakaluk (2005:141) explains further, bad character overshadows one's wish for truly good things – or makes wish give misleading reports about what is truly good. Wish "naturally yields correct perceptions and intuitive judgments". However, wish can give misleading reports if it is no longer in good natural condition (2005:141); once wish has deviated from its natural (good) condition, its reports become "unreliable and reflect rather the subjective condition of the person whose wish it is" (Pakaluk, 2005:142). Hence, when a smart person's thinking is being guided by spurious ends, her smartness becomes mere cunning.

In summary, the reciprocity of virtue features centrally in Aristotle's moral psychology, for we cannot determine the mean (i.e. what is virtuous action) unless we have both excellence of *hexis* and *phronesis*: "hitting the mean in our affective response, i.e. getting right the degree and nuance of the reaction, and in general its inflection, would be inconceivable apart from some critical judgement which informed it" (Sherman, 1989:167).

b. Character and Choice: Virtue is a *Hexis Prohairetike*

The choice condition is a notable component in Aristotle's virtue theory, which sets it apart from consequentialist views of character and ethics. First, choice is an expression of the voluntary nature of an agent's *hexeis* and actions. This means that actions issuing from the moral agent's choice are those on account of which the agent could be praised or blamed for. This idea can be contrasted to the way we view the actions of young children – we cannot appraise the actions of young children because, insofar as they are not fully virtuous agents, their actions are in a sense involuntary, easily persuaded by instinct and appetites. The capacity of choice is essentially what makes us moral agents and enable us to act on rational guidance (as our *ergon* prescribes) and flourish.

Second, choosing to act for the sake of the good and the fine, as a matter of affective and rational commitment to the good and the *fine*,[129] is a further distinctive mark of Aristotelian virtue theory for it establishes the link between one's virtuous character with one's actions and flourishing, as Aristotle illustrates in the character types distinguishing between the fully virtuous, the merely continent and the *akratic* agent. Whether a moral agent achieves *eudaimonia* or not does not lie so much in the actions they undertake (although this is important) but rather more so on the quality of the actions; the fully virtuous agent and the merely continent agent could both be performing the exact same action (i.e. donating the exact same amount to the exact same cause at the exact same time), but because the merely continent agent does not perform the act *as* the fully virtuous agent would in terms of her affective state, the merely continent agent is unable to fully appreciate the goodness of the act such that her

[129] Goodness in this chapter is discussed in a teleological sense that is understood in terms of the excellent exercise of the human function, i.e. rationality. In the previous chapter (2.5.2), I discuss how the notion of *kalon* (in the sense of beauty) can enrich our understanding of goodness.

act does not constitute her *eudaimonia*.[130] This can be further contrasted with the *akratic* agent, who despite knowing what is right (i.e. satisfies one part of the knowledge condition, viz. the 'that'), nevertheless lacks both the right desires and the strength of will to act on her judgment; hence she acts against her judgement. Thus in Aristotle's virtue theory, one can only be as eudaimon as one is virtuous.

Choice (*prohairesis*) is a deliberational desire (*NE* 1113a10–11). It holds the key to understanding why virtue is a *hexis prohairetike*. Choice is the faculty that enables us to act on reasons, i.e. to act with a view to some end as a result of rationality. When an agent exercises her rationality well, she is exercising her function well (Scaltsas, 1996:302). So, acting from choice is part of the requirements of a good life because it is the accord between character and reason. A young child cannot use reason to decide how much ice-cream she should eat, for it is likely that her appetites are not guided by correct reason (i.e. the child thinks that ice-cream tastes good, so she is eating lots of it). The more our deliberative capacities develop, the more we are able to think and shape our appetites (i.e. I am going to eat one scoop of ice-cream, for it is the right amount to find it pleasurable while still being a part of a healthy diet). Adults are able to act on decision, although they do not always choose to, particularly if their *hexeis* do not stand in good condition in relation to their appetites (i.e. such as in the case of the *akratic* or the merely continent agent). Hence, for agents whose *hexeis* do not stand in good condition in a way that makes them amenable to reason, their inner life and interaction with others are often ridden with turmoil, with rationality dictating one thing but their appetites another.

Aristotle explains that although we are born with natural character that consists of innate dispositions (*NE* 1144a3–4), these only become 'natural virtues' through habituation.

[130] As discussed in section 2.5.2, there is a sense of beauty and truth in *kalon* that complements our understanding of *eudaimonia*, which cannot be fully appreciated by the continent agent if she does not value virtuous actions for what they are.

Nevertheless, natural virtues can be distinguished from 'full' or 'moral virtue' in the following way:

> Therefore, as in the part of us which forms opinions there are two types, cleverness and practical wisdom, so too in the moral part there are two types, natural virtue and virtue in the strict sense, and of these the latter involves practical wisdom. (*NE* 1144a15–17)

On the one hand, unlike full virtue, natural virtue is a habituated, stable trait like bravery, which does not consist of the intellectual component of practical wisdom that enables a brave agent to act intelligently – e.g. avoid brash risks. On the other hand, full virtue is a natural virtue – viz. a stable disposition acquired via habituation – but one that has been integrated with the intellectual component of practical wisdom.

Character is deeper and much more stable and reliable than personality traits. Its growth starts with mere tendencies which become likes and dislikes through experience. Gradually we come to value things as good or bad, and as fine or base. This enables us to choose certain good things and actions for what they are. Hence, when we say that a character trait is deeply ingrained, we mean more than the idea that we have acquired long-standing likes or dislikes or habits of action; we express our true self through the choices we make. As Athanassoulis explains, "when we make moral choices we express, through these choices, aspects of ourselves and display our values, interests, and commitments through them" (2016:208). The virtuous agent's choice is choice of the good and the fine following from her affective and rational commitment to them.

In summary, the virtuous agent not only acts on the correctly deliberated decision, but also undertakes the acts for their own sakes on account of her rational and affective commitment to the good and the fine. Virtuous actions are done for the right reasons – for the sake of the good

and the fine. These choices are determined by correct reason as the *phronimos* would make them. Hence, a virtue, like bravery, is a *hexis prohairetike* in the sense that the brave agent fights by choice, she feels neither too much nor too little fear, and her bravery motivates her to take action (in this case, to battle on and fight); *phronesis* informs bravery with situational assessments which enables the agent to choose whether it is time to attack or retreat. Taken as a whole, the virtuous agent is someone who makes (good) choices and live by choice, as opposed to living by the dictates or at the mercy of her emotions or whims.

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assessments which enables the agent to choose whether it is time to attack or retreat. Taken as a whole, the virtuous agent is someone who makes (good) choices and live by choice, as opposed to living by the dictates or at the mercy of her emotions or whims.

c. The Knowledge Condition: Virtue Lies in a Mean Relative to Us

Phronesis is important because moral truth is context-sensitive and thus not codifiable in exceptionless principles. Moreover, one can easily have mistaken views about whether one's life is *eudaimon* not simply because it is easy to deceive oneself, but also because it is easy to have mistaken conceptions of *eudaimonia in* what living well entails. For example, one might believe that an eudaimon life consists largely in physical pleasure (Hursthouse and Pettigrove, 2018). Since we can go wrong in all kinds of ways, "fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well… Similarly with regard to actions also there is excess, defect, and the intermediate" (*NE* 1106b15–25),[131] we rely on *phronesis* to guide us in recognising what is truly good. *Phronesis* involves not only knowledge of universals, but it must also involve discernment of particular instances of the good on the basis of correct reason (*orthos logos*) or *phronesis*.

In NE VI.8, Aristotle likens practical wisdom to political wisdom by suggesting that, in the way there are decrees that legislate on affairs pertaining to the city in politics there are similarly such codes of conduct that pertain to the actions of men (this could be either the prescriptions of *endoxa* or *orthos logos*). And just as politicians require political wisdom to apply the decree to individual acts, moral agents also require practical wisdom to apply the universal principles to particular situations. This is because "practical universals" (Hughes, 2001:132) such as

[131] As most commentators rightly point out, the doctrine of the mean is not about moderation (e.g. Urmson, 1973; Kupperman, 1999:207) but a doctrine about equilibrium (Gottlieb, 2009:22–25).

kindness, courage, or temperance manifest differently in different situations such that their instances elude precise codification. It is not possible (nor practical) to give rules which will automatically and without exceptions identify what would, for example, be an act of kindness in every situation.

Rabinoff presents the idea that *phronesis* is an intellectual kind of perception which ensures that the perceptual work of character – the way the good appears to us, the "apparent good" – coheres with the perceptual work of the practical intellect – the way our intellect grasps the "true good" (2018:114).[132] According to Pakaluk, "the faculty of wishing is naturally constituted to wish for ends that are in fact good" (2005:142). The idea, then, is that character, on the one hand, generates a view of the apparent good, whereas intellect (through wish) on the other hand generates a view of the true good, as long as the *hexeis* are in good condition (in accordance with *orthos logos*) (Pakaluk, 2005:141–43). Though the proper object of intellect (i.e. s*ophia*) concerns unchanging universals, in the sphere of practical activities that pertain to ethics the subject matter is particular and variable. In order for the true good to be preserved and realised in action, it must be adjusted to the particular context. *Phronesis* serves precisely this function: "*phronesis* is a manner of perceiving that is both articulate enough to be sensitive to and discerning of the ethically relevant features, and flexible and open enough to be determined by deliberation" (Rabinoff, 2018:114).

Therefore, when Aristotle says that the mean "is not one, nor the same for all" (*NE* 1106a32) or that the mean lies "not in the object but relatively to us" (*NE* 1106b6), he does not mean for his words to be understood in a meta-ethically relative sense.[133] Rather, Aristotle is indicating

[132] Also see Sherman (1989) where *phronesis* is discussed in terms of ethical perception.

[133] The importance of moral perception will be discussed below; the discussion on pluralism in FCVE will be discussed in section 4.3.

that moral agents need to appeal to *phronesis* (i.e. perceptual practical intellect) in order to know how universals apply in particular instances to hit the mean that realises the good. The task then is to explain the perceptual function of *phronesis*, which concerns correct perception of particulars and the intellectual grasp of the proper aims in life.

3.3.3 Phronesis, Moral Perception, and Orthos Logos

For Aristotle, *phronesis* is, first, the intellectual capacity to deliberate well in order to discover and evaluate the means (i.e. course of action) – the particular in the minor premise – which leads to the determining of the mean in a practical situation. Second, *phronesis* enables good practical reasoning by providing correct apprehension of particulars through the ability to discern particular acts as instances of universals (viz. the good). Aristotle likens the practical perception of particulars with the intellectual perception of triangles, and it with sensory perception. He explains that the perceptual capacity of *phronesis* does not concern perception of facts relating to physical things, such as 'seeing that' the sky is blue. Rather, practical perception of *phronesis* involves recognising something, e.g. a figure, 'as' being of a certain kind, e.g. a triangle (*NE* 1142a23–31). On this understanding, *phronesis* is perception of particulars which enables an agent to perceive the moral features in acts (seeing an act as kind) and to classify acts accordingly (Hughes, 2001:130). In other words, *phronesis* enables us to recognise a particular act, such as making a donation, 'as' an instance of universals, such as goodness or kindness.

On the other hand, the perception of particulars starts off from a general understanding of what it is an instance of; therefore, *phronesis* must also concern universals. If the *phronimos* witnesses an act of dishonesty, such as someone misrepresenting a sales transaction, she recognises that 'this is morally bad'. By contrast, she would not judge it dishonest upon encountering someone lying in a game of bluff. What this brings out is that the general

understanding of dishonesty *as* bad also requires one to be able to distinguish between particular instances of dishonesty and discern which ones are moral instances, which, as McDowell points out, 'merit' our moral response of disapproval (1985). Without an understanding of these concepts at a general level, one would be unable to perceive a particular act *as* dishonest and, hence, *as* bad (Hughes, 2001). However, Aristotle also notes that the universals are derived from particulars (*NE* 1143a32–b5). As Hughes explains, "in practical matters we build up our notion of the end to aim at – kindness, for example – by grasping instances of it. 'Universals are derived from particulars'" (2001:132). Hence, the perceptual capacity of *phronesis* works with knowledge of particulars and universals in tandem: the *phronimos* has a correct grasp of kindness through which she can correctly identify particular instances of kindness, which at the same time she relies on her knowledge of the particulars to inform her grasp of the universals.

This general understanding of universals enables the *phronimos* to perceive a dishonest situation as that which requires an ethical response (which is not the case for the game of bluff). An important difference between the perception of moral demands or values and the perception of sensory qualities is that dishonest deeds do not *causally* prompt us to disapprove of them in the way that an apple *causes* us to see redness. McDowell contends that dishonest actions are such as to *merit* our disapproval. He explains that the concept of 'to merit disapproval' is analogous to the concept of 'to merit fear': we can "make sense of fear by seeing it as a response to objects that merit such a response, or as the intelligibly defective product of a propensity towards responses that would be intelligible in this way. For an object to merit fear just is for it to be fearful" (1998:144). The way we come to recognise that a situation demands a response is to become responsive to moral reasons: on seeing an old lady struggling to find a seat in a crowded bus, the virtues of kindness or care or justice sensitise us to respond to the situation.

However, this sensitivity to moral reasons does not seem to be the work of reason alone, as McDowell (1994) claims, but also as a function of emotions (for fine passions) more generally, which belongs to the domain of the *hexeis*.[134] The feeling that we should do something for the old lady is what sensitises us to respond in the above example.[135] In FCVE, the sensitisation of the non-rational soul to the requirements of moral reasons is the work habituation, which Aristotle is keen to emphasise from early on in the discussions in *NE* II. When FCVE defines virtuous action as what the virtuous agent (*phronimos*) characteristically does, what this means is that: *phronesis* provides the standard that fixes the mean in both its perceptual and deliberative functions, such that excellence in moral judgment is that which hits the mean because it is in accordance with *orthos logos*. *Phronesis* is understood as "not merely the state in accordance with correct reason, but the state that implies the presence of correct reason, that is virtue; and practical wisdom is correct reason about such matters" (*NE* 1144b24–26).

In summary, virtue proper involves both intellectual and character virtue since the understanding of virtuous action on FCVE is predicated on the agent's moral psychology which reveal the agent's affect, reasoning, choice, preferences, and goals, that are essential parts of who the agent is. It is in this respect that an agent's actions are evaluated in terms of how they stand in relation to *eudaimonia*.

[134] He argues that the way we grasp moral reasons is through our intellect because "the ethical is a domain of rational requirements. We are alerted to these demands by acquiring appropriate conceptual capacities" (McDowell, 1994:82).

[135] This position echoes that of Williams' discussed in section 1.2.2, which is that there can be no external reasons for motivation, for all motivation involves a desire, which arises from within the moral agent.

Chapter Four: Ethical Objectivism in FCVE

This chapter examines FCVE's claim to a realist metaphysics and epistemology, on which FCVE is able to retain the position of moral objectivity while also leaving scope for some degree of cultural pluralism. I contend that FCVE can insist "on objectivity, while denying universality" (Brown, 1980:xxiii) by demonstrating how this view reconciles the respective desiderata of objectivism and pluralism in accordance with what I call '*soft* realism'. Soft realism is a position which recognises that (a) the virtues are objective in light of Aristotle's function argument, such that evaluative statements about them can be true objectively and independently of an individual culture's value system, while (b) the particular interpretations of these virtues by different cultures can nevertheless be preserved, within the parameters of moral objectivity delineated in (a).

4.1 The Problem

I shall here endeavour to reconcile a form of realism – one which grounds moral objectivity in the virtues – with a sensitivity to cultural pluralism in the context of FCVE. Such a project, however, faces pushback from critics, who argue that FCVE is connected with a "turn towards relativism" (Nussbaum, 1993:243),[136] whereby virtue-concepts are capable of being defined differently in different cultures. Accordingly, as a proponent of FCVE, I offer an objectivist defence of the virtue-concepts, which preserves FCVE's objectivist premise. I do this by appealing to Aristotle's naturalistic moral realism, which claims both that i) the virtues exist in an objective sense, grounded in our human function, and, derivative from i), that ii) the virtues can, accordingly, be objectively true or false. This chapter depends on employing several

[136] I should clarify that Nussbaum argues against critics who hold the view that Aristotelian ethics is connected with a "turn towards relativism" (1993:243). I explore Nussbaum's position in section 4.1.3 of this chapter. My reference to Nussbaum here exclusively relates to the borrowing of the term she has used to summarise the position of the critics, namely that Aristotle's ethics is suspect to relativist charges.

technical meta-ethical terms, which I believe may be prudent to fully delineate before proceeding any further.

First, the term 'universalism', as I use it, is the view that, if ϕing is permissible in a culture as prescribed on a strong codification thesis,[137] then it is permissible in every (similar) culture. Similarly, if ϕing is *impermissible* in a culture, it will be *impermissible* in every culture. We can usefully contrast universalism with 'pluralism', which I take to be the view that, ϕing is permissible in a particular culture does *not* entail that it is permissible in every (similar) culture. In this context, we can think of cultures as groups that endorse different moral schemas, a point that will return to later on.

Additionally, the term 'objectivity' is used to denote the ontological outlook that truth exists and that it is unique. This stands in contrast with 'relativism', which describes the meta-ethical position that there are different truths which hold relatively to different cultures.

Further, I shall use the term 'realism' to delineate the meta-ethical position that moral claims refer to objective features of the world with unique truth values. Realism is traditionally associated with correspondence theories of truth, which appeal to some kind of relation to reality which is independent of one's individual perspective, beliefs, or attitudes.

Lastly, as I use it, 'soft realism' is the ontological position where truth is held to be objective and unique but the objectivity of (moral) knowledge and truth only serves to restrict the scope of our (moral) concepts, meaning that logical space for pluralist interpretations is preserved. In other words, there are coherence requirements for such terms but, within the scope of these limitations, the interpretations and weights given to particular virtues may differ.

[137] See the previous discussion on the strong codifiability thesis in section 2.3.

Having laid out these definitions, we can now more fully see the force of the worry that FCVE must overcome. The difficulty is that there appears to be an inconsistency in attempting to preserve both the objectivist desideratum and the pluralist desideratum because, while realism – and the objectivism that underlies it – rests on the idea that, in principle, there is a unique truth about moral matters, it appears that, in order to defend pluralism, we must abandon the claim to uniqueness in order to permit the possibility that incompatible beliefs could be equally true. This is particularly problematic because there are strong reasons in favour of retaining both desiderata.

First, it seems advantageous to preserve objectivism, for if the virtues did not have objective status such that claims about the virtues are neither objectively true or false, then FCVE is vulnerable to fully (cultural) relativist interpretations, in which 'anything goes'. Another particularly strong case for maintaining a realist position is that it secures the objective truth-aptness of moral claims.

Second, there are strong reasons to maintain a pluralist account as well. Within Aristotle's ethics, the motivation to avoid ethical universalism comes from two sources. First, there is the non-codifiability consideration discussed in earlier chapters: it is very rare for two sets of ethical circumstances to be so similar as to permit ethical principles to be applied in exactly the same way. Instead, Aristotle contends that *phronesis* (practical wisdom) consists in appealing to a virtuous agent's moral judgment so that general ethical principles can be applied 'in a correct way' across differing circumstances. Accordingly, in Aristotelian ethics, it is entirely possible that the right action could differ across similar circumstances. This kind of flexibility in moral thinking when extended to the societal level seems to be especially beneficial, suggesting that there are several reasons for retaining cultural pluralism or working to make it consistent with FCVE. Second, there is pluralism across cultures. It may be sensible to respect

different interpretations and weightings of the relative importance of various virtues, permitting the recognition that every culture has a unique history and heritage in which they pursue their own values and aims of flourishing. Thus, pluralism at the societal level recognises and respects cultural diversity and tolerance (Boas, 1887). Additionally, pluralism avoids the implausible assumption that there is one culture whose moral beliefs – and only theirs – are objectively true.

I believe that it is possible for both attractive objectivist and pluralist features to be preserved in an account of FCVE. I contend that this can be accomplished by developing an account of *soft* realism in order to defend the objectivity of virtue and the possibility of pluralism. I appeal to Scaltsas' (1989) interpretation of Davidson's metaphysics and show that, insofar as soft realism can satisfy both (1) the 'uniqueness criterion' (UC), in which the objectivity and hence uniqueness of truth is established, and (2) the 'truth criterion' (TC), in which coherence acts as a test for truth claims, then FCVE should be able to support both the objectivity of the virtues *and* accommodate pluralist interpretations of them.[138]

4.1.2 Ontological Objectivity and Epistemological Objectivity

In this subsection, I lay out the desiderata to be met by FCVE. Meta-ethics deals with so-called 'foundational issues' in moral philosophy, such as how morality can be justified, a question whose answers largely fall into two categories: the 'ontological justifications' and the 'epistemological justifications'.[139] The ontological justifications deal with the objectivity of moral properties by considering their status as existents. Moral realists (i.e. cognitivists and objectivists) typically subscribe to the view that moral properties objectively exist, which, in

[138] These terms are adaptations of Scaltsas' usage of 'uniqueness claim' and 'truth claim' (1989). I refer to them as 'uniqueness criterion' and 'truth criterion'.

[139] These terms are adaptations of Timmons' concepts of 'ontological objectivity' and 'methodological objectivity' (2006). I retain the former and refer the latter 'epistemological objectivity'.

turn, means that the moral judgments that make pronouncements on these properties have determinate truth values. These commitments also entail that there is a single set of moral truths.[140] Additionally, moral objectivity is most often associated with "attitude-independence" (Hopster, 2017:763), in the sense that moral facts are understood to have a degree of independence from mental states. The commitment to this sort of independence significantly distinguishes moral realists from relativist and constructivist positions. Relativists believe that moral judgments are true or false only relative to some particular standpoint (for instance, that of a culture or a historical period) while constructivists believe that, insofar as there are moral truths, they are not fixed by normative facts independently of what rational agents would agree to under some specified conditions of choice.

a. Ontological objectivity

Moral realists who defend the objectivity of morality hold that true moral claims indicate an objective moral reality. Hence, realism links truth with reality and holds that moral statements are true or false because they are claims about objective moral facts. Accordingly, in order to remain an objectivist position, FCVE must hold that moral facts are objective facts about which ethical goods we ought to pursue, which character traits we ought to develop, and which moral actions we ought to undertake. Furthermore, claims about such facts should be held to, themselves, be objectively true or false.

However, following Scaltsas (1989), it is clear that FCVE can sustain its realist and objectivist thesis only if it is consistent with the following two conditions for truth. First, FCVE must be consistent with the truth criterion (TC), which states that a system of beliefs is capable of having a truth value – i.e. of being true or false. The truth criterion is oftentimes associated

[140] "That there is a single true morality" (Timmons, 2006:539).

with relativist moral outlooks that take coherence to be both the ontological and epistemological justification for truth. In these relativistic cases, as long as a system of beliefs is coherent, it qualifies as being 'true', without needing to also correspond to objective reality. Accordingly, TC on its own is a necessary but insufficient condition to establish realism.

The second criterion is the uniqueness criterion (UC), which affirms that there is only *one* true belief system (Scaltsas, 1989:129). UC commits one to the idea that the truth claims pertain to a unique, objective reality and, accordingly, cannot be satisfied by relativistic positions – which, instead, hold that, while there can be moral truths, what is true for A may not be true for B. Therefore, in order to claim that FCVE has a realist meta-ethics, the position must support *both* TC and UC.

b. Epistemological Objectivity

Epistemological justification concerns how we seek and justify our moral truths via our methods of reasoning, in order to provide an answer to *how* we can come to know objective moral truths. It can be helpfully viewed as providing a 'test' for our knowledge about the objectivity of moral claims. Epistemological justification for moral truths can take the form of logical analyses of our reasoning processes, overall coherence, or naturalistic claims concerning whether the moral properties depicted by our judgements can be identified, reduced to, or explained by reference to natural properties.

The Neo-Aristotelian position that morality can be objectively founded on human characteristics (in particular, what is *good* for humans) is a type of moral realism that espouses such a naturalist epistemic approach in attempting to provide epistemic justification. The epistemic approach that FCVE appeals to is the endoxic method in establishing moral truths. This combines coherentism as a test for justifying truth, with the realist thesis of objectivity by

appealing to the moral judgements of the virtuous agent, whose deliberation is led by *phronesis*, which entails a correct comprehension of the objective good.

While conventionally realism presupposes a correspondence theory of truth, this does prevent the use of coherence as an epistemological test for truth. The idea is that, coherence could be a test for truth among beliefs held within the objective true belief system, such that: a belief is true if and only if it coheres with other objective *true* beliefs in the system. In the case of FCVE, the system – and its objective true beliefs – is grounded on *eudaimonia*, which, in turn, is specified through the function argument and Aristotle's naturalist metaethics. The endoxic method of FCVE must adopt this realist methodology of justification in order to show that there is a unique set of answers to be found in moral questions about virtue.

4.1.3 The Relativist Challenge to FCVE

There are several ways in which the relativist may object to FCVE. One such way might be to point out that, because virtues are 'thick'[141] concepts that are acquired, understood, and used in a specific cultural context (or conceptual scheme), they should be understood (only) *within* that context, which renders them conceptually relative. Another relativist critique of FCVE might involve suggesting that, because Aristotelian ethics eschews the strong codifiability thesis, it is incapable of making any true universalisable claims about moral judgement and right action, leaving it up to the individual agent to determine how to interpret and apply the virtues. However, while it is true that FCVE rejects "general algorithms and abstract rules in favor of an account of the good life based on specific modes of virtuous action" (Nussbaum, 1993:243) – thus allowing for pluralism based on context-sensitivity – FCVE still maintains the moral objectivity of *eudaimonia* and, in doing so, meets UC.

[141] For discussion on 'thick' concepts, see Williams (1995).

Nussbaum provides one response to the relativist challenge by arguing that there can be a species-wide (i.e. global), true, *nominal* definition of the virtues based on the shared human experiences of confronting of the same existential challenges everywhere (1993). Nussbaum calls the various spheres of experience, which are demarcated by different challenges, 'grounding experiences' (1993:247).[142] Each virtue is understood in terms of the sphere of experience it pertains to, which enables us to deal with the challenges specific to that sphere. For example, courage is considered as the virtue which corresponds to the sphere of experience demarcated by the fear of suffering significant damage (especially, of dying), while temperance is considered as the virtue corresponding to the sphere of bodily appetites and pleasures. In addition, given that the sphere of each virtue describes a common human experience, the virtues can be considered to be *objective* in the sense that they arise as universal responses to the same (or very similar) universal experiences.

For Nussbaum, it is no accident that languages share the same virtue-terms to refer to the same ethical experiences. Just as 'thunder' denotes the experience of noise in the clouds, the term 'injustice' denotes the "experiences [of injustice – presumably] of harm, deprivation, inequality" (Nussbaum, 1993:248). In other words, the reference of the virtue-terms is fixed by the respective grounding experiences that are shared by all human beings: it is by virtue of being members of the same (human) species, viz. shared species membership, that we all possess these ethical concepts such as justice or injustice, because we are all able to experience these same feelings and form concepts that represent these same experiences. Each virtue-term, then, can be understood as naming the 'solution' to a sphere's central challenge. From these

[142] According to Nussbaum, "Everyone has some attitude, and corresponding behaviour, towards her own death; her bodily appetites and their management; her property and its use; the distribution of social goods; telling the truth; being kind to others; cultivating a sense of play and delight, and so on. No matter where one lives one cannot escape these questions, so long as one is living a human life. But then this means that one's behaviour falls, willy-nilly, within the sphere of the Aristotelian virtue, in each case. If it is not appropriate, it is inappropriate; it cannot be off the map altogether" (Nussbaum, 1993:247).

observations, Nussbaum concludes that we share a set of non-relative virtues, which are held globally, and which help individuals across every society deal with these common existential challenges. In this global framework, then, that truths like 'justice is equality', are unique and objective.

The relativist, however, contends that, while different cultures may deal with the same challenges, it seems unreasonable to hold that there is a single solution to each one of the spheres of challenges. For example, it may be the case that ‘distributive justice’ is understood as ‘proportional equality according to merit’ in Society A, whereas it is understood as ‘proportional equality according to class privilege’ in Society B. On this basis, the relativist can then claim that this divergence in the concept of ‘distributive justice’ between the two societies stems from conceptual relativity, which suggests that these two societies *experience* these challenges in different ways. Furthermore, the relativist can suggest that, that we experience the existential challenges differently is because the concepts *themselves*, which are responsible for constructing the grounding experiences, are culturally determined. For it is well-supported anthropologically that experiences are heavily shaped by both individual and societal beliefs, languages, and, more generally, the wider historical and sociological contexts. This would suggest that in reality, as Nussbaum has also acknowledged, the “‘grounding experience’ is an irreducible plurality of experiences, highly various and in each case deeply infused with cultural interpretation” (Nussbaum, 1993:252).

Hence, for members of Society B, distribution based on class privilege might phenomenologically feel equitable because, given their specific sociological context, the concept of merit is fundamentally intertwined with class privilege. The poorer members of Society B, then, would likely not experience their relative poverty as an injustice or as being inequitable. However, if the grounding experiences really are constructed by concepts which

are themselves relative to a cultural framework as this suggests, then it seems that relativism succeeds in undermining the idea of a single, context-independent truth about virtues and their particular definitions.

Additionally, relativism also appears to lurk in background of FCVE in the form of contextualism. If we accept that the truth about virtue is context-sensitive, then it seems that we must allow for various context-relative instantiations of the virtues. I will argue that FCVE can keep these apart; there are differences between the content of the virtues (which are objective) and the context-relativity of their instantiation or weightings (which can morally vary by culture). For example, on FCVE, the definition of courage does not specify exactly how much fear is warranted in *all* situations and which responses are to be considered courageous ones. Nevertheless, FCVE, as a realist theory, *cannot* allow incompatible definitions of a virtue – e.g. it cannot permit distributive justice to be defined as 'proportional equality according to merit' in Society A, while being defined as 'proportional equality according to class privilege' in Society B. Due to its commitment to moral realism and thus the necessity that UC be met, FCVE must, instead, claim that that either both societies are wrong in their definition of distributive justice or that one society is right while the other is wrong. Thus, while context-sensitivity will allow for there to be several true ways to flourish, given different contexts, the requirement that there still be a unique objective truth will significantly restrict the range of these true forms of flourishing.

The significant challenge that we are left with, then, is to discover the objectively true definition of each virtue-term and to determine the limitations within which interpretations of it can still be considered true. Given this task, I believe it is important to begin by investigating the basis on which FCVE establishes the objective truth claims of virtue-terms. I contend that this can be done by demonstrating that *eudaimonia* is the source of truths for virtue-terms, while

accepting contextualism in both the understanding of virtues and the objectivity of *eudaimonia*. Accordingly, FCVE must therefore defend the ontological objectivity of virtue and the good, by fulfilling the following ontological desideratum of FCVE's realism: that there is ontological objectivity concerning moral facts about the traits and goods that we ought to develop and pursue, and that moral judgements about these facts have truth values. Aristotle's ethical objectivist commitment, in FCVE, lies in his meta-ethical function argument. This distinguishes FCVE's position from many neo-Aristotelian interpretations that take Aristotle's ethics to be based on a kind of philosophised psychology (Scaltsas:1996).[143] I shall explain that Aristotle's function argument is not based on our biological markers but on his metaphysical biology, thereby avoiding committing the naturalistic fallacy. By defending FCVE's ontological realism, I support the position that there is a single true interpretation of virtue-concepts based on truth about *eudaimonia*, thus satisfying the UC.

Furthermore, FCVE must demonstrate that contextualism does not lead to conceptual relativity and, thereby, threaten objectivity. I argue that, in fact, contextualism permits the possibility of pluralism while avoiding relativism. Accordingly, I suggest that FCVE must therefore appeal to a soft realist epistemology in order to explain how to find the truth about the virtues. The endoxic method should do just that, by testing whether various interpretations of the virtues cohere with true beliefs about *eudaimonia* and the virtues' nominal definitions. This method satisfies the epistemological desideratum of FCVE's realism, as set out by TC. The endoxic method assumes that moral truth is context-sensitive and exists in the *endoxa* but that we do not have any privileged access to it. Hence, while moral truths are (partially) revealed by a society's *endoxa*, we also need to also appeal to coherence and *orthos logos* (*phronesis*) in

[143] "As we shall see, psychological dispositions will need guidance before they can reach what is really good for humans. Psychology, even enhanced with metaphysics, cannot deliver us ethical theory, and in this particular case, the human good" (1996:297).

order to weed out the incorrect and irrelevant *endoxa*. I suggest that the coherence test (i.e. TC) for virtue needs to occur on the basis of objective true beliefs (i.e. UC) about *eudaimonia*. Accordingly, on this view, a belief is true if and only if it coheres with the true beliefs about *eudaimonia.*

Having shown that the virtues can be objective in the nominal sense, I explain in section two how FCVE defends, on the basis of Aristotle's naturalistic realism, the objectivity of the human good as a set of species-wide nominal virtues. In particular, I show that the good, *eudaimonia*, and virtue are non-relative. This fulfills the ontological and objectivist desiderata of FCVE's realism. In section three, I defend the possibility of pluralism on the basis of Aristotle's thesis about the context-sensitivity of the good and virtue. However, FCVE can defend pluralism only if it also fulfills the epistemological desideratum of realism (i.e. TC) – otherwise, FCVE would collapse into relativism. Accordingly, I demonstrate that FCVE must adopt a soft form of realism which allows for there to be multiple ways to interpret and realise the good in different circumstances, such as cultural backgrounds (thereby satisfying the pluralist desideratum).

4.2 Aristotle's Naturalistic Realism

In this section, I propose an interpretation of FCVE that satisfies the ontological desideratum for FCVE's realism. I contend that FCVE should be described as a form of naturalistic realism which is based on essentialist perfectionism (EP). EP holds that "(a) there is a proper end for a human being [i.e. *eudaimonia*]; (b) that it depends upon the distinctive capacities of human nature; and (c) that the virtues are the excellences that enable a person to engage in the activities that realise that end" (Jacobs, 2002:96). The claims of EP correspond to Aristotle's naturalistic realism claims in the following way: that (i) the virtues and the human good are universal, i.e. they are not relative to individuals, cultures, viewpoints, or conceptual schemes; (ii) facts about

which things are good or bad, what we ought to do, and who we ought to be are natural facts; and (iii) claims about the virtues and the good possess truth values.

4.2.1 *Eudaimonia* is the Objective Good

In this section, I explain why Aristotle's ethical theory is a form of naturalistic realism and show that he holds a form of teleological or essentialist perfectionism (EP). In particular, I contend that Aristotle believes that our moral goodness and flourishing can be defined in relation to the excellent realisation of our nature as prescribed by our function, which is set out in Aristotle's function argument identified as rationality. The fact that the moral virtues and the human good both derive from the understanding of our species nature informed by meta-physical biology eliminates the gap between the normative and the natural, thereby closes the 'is-ought' gap.

a. The Function Argument

Aristotle's function argument (FA) is based on his account of human nature, which falls under what I call his metaphysical biology.[144] Aristotle believes that the key to *eudaimonia* lies in the essence of the human species, which he identifies as "activity of the soul in accord with the best and most complete virtue" (*NE* 1098a17–19). The FA is Aristotle's naturalistic way to establish that the human good is objective: "We achieve a complete good… only if we completely fulfil our nature, not if we simply fulfil our conception of our good" (Irwin, 1988:363). Even if some people would be indifferent as to what our nature prescribes for

[144] See footnote 139, Scaltsas (1996).

happiness, Aristotle wants to show that the human good, along with the possibility for human virtue, are both built into our nature. What follows is a logical reconstruction of the FA:[145]

1. X's goodness depends on its function, such that X is good if X performs its function well.
2. Human beings have a function.
3. The human function is activity (actions) guided by reason or the part of the soul that obeys to reason.
4. The function of an F is the same in kind as the function of an excellent F.
5. So, the function of the excellent human being is excellent rational activity.
6. Each action is performed well when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate virtue.
7. Hence, the human good (viz. happiness, i.e. living and doing well) is rational activity in accordance with virtue, or in accordance with the best and most complete virtue (NE 1098a16–17).

Aristotle holds that all living things have a nature. The nature of a thing is its final cause, viz. its goal or end (i.e. its *telos*; *Phys.* 192b32–3; 194a28–9). The final cause is that for the sake of which a living thing exists; and this is also its function, viz. the characteristic way the organism does what it does (i.e. its *ergon* or work; *EE* 1219a8). For Aristotle, the function of an organism should be sought in its peculiar (*idion*) characteristic, a characteristic which no other kind of organism possesses, and which contributes to the organism's flourishing. To single out our species' particular function, Aristotle proceeds biologically and rejects the vegetative, perceptive and locomotive functions that are common between human beings and other

[145] This argument occurs at *NE* 1097b25–1098a17. The reconstruction of the argument is based on Gottlieb (2009:66–67).

creatures, which suggests that it is the capacity to use reason that is our unique function, which is objectively built into our nature. *Eudaimonia*, then is objectively grounded in the excellent activity of the parts of the soul that have reason or share in reason in accordance with an objective standard of excellent performance, i.e. the virtues.

The question then becomes how our function is linked to the human good and our own goodness (in premises 4 and 5). For Aristotle, the human good and virtue lie in the *excellent* performance of our function because the excellent performance is what makes the difference between simply functioning and functioning well (*NE* 1098a10–11). Hence, while functioning and functioning well are the same in kind, i.e. they refer to exercising the same function, they differ because of the absence or inclusion of *virtue*.[146] Another way to understand the connection between the good and function is to recognise that function and *telos* are interwoven. The *telos* is always a good which becomes manifest when the organism's function is performed well. Accordingly, the good human is one who reaches full development – viz. fulfills one's *telos* and flourishes – by performing one's essential function well.[147] On this score, Aristotle finds it reasonable that the excellent human being, one who exhibits virtue, is the person who performs the human function well (premise 5).

Next, Aristotle says that 'virtue' is the prerequisite for performing an action well (premise 6). For Aristotle, the virtue appropriate to one's action enables one to function well in the performance of that action:

[146] *NE* 1098a9. The subsequent steps of the argument are Gottlieb's (2009:66–7).

[147] For Plato, there is no difference between functioning and functioning well (Gottlieb, 2009:69). However, for Aristotle, the concept of 'function' merely means 'activity' and 'achievement' (Baker, 2015). The exact sense depends on the entity: the eye's function is its particular activity, i.e. seeing, while the sculptor's function is both the activity of sculpting and the achievement of producing a sculpture. It seems that the human function is both a characteristic *activity*, i.e. a characteristic way of living which is the activity of life guided by reason, and an *achievement*, i.e. living well. So, according to Baker's interpretation, goodness seems to depend on achievement.

> If … the function of man [is] an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate virtue: if this is the case], human good turns out to be activity of soul exhibiting virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete. (*NE* 1098a13–18)

This demonstrates that, for Aristotle, virtue is a prerequisite to leading a life in accordance with reason: a virtue is a quality that makes one skilled at performing the human function well (Korsgaard, 2008:132; Broadie, 1991:37; Hutchinson, 1986). Virtue *constitutes eudaimonia* because virtue is a perfection (i.e. an 'excellence') in the sense that, when an individual becomes virtuous, then one fulfills one's nature and flourishes:

> But rather virtue is a kind of perfection — for when it acquires its own virtue, then we say that each thing is perfect, for then it is most in accordance with [its] nature, just as a circle is perfect when it has become a circle in the highest degree and when it is best — and vice is a destruction of this and a departure [from this]. (*Phys.* 246a13–17)

Additionally, virtue can be seen to be *conducive* to *eudaimonia* in that it enables one to exercise one's function well. One needs to develop the virtue of temperance, for instance, in order to manage one's appetitive desires well. One also needs the moral virtues, i.e. the other-regarding virtues, such as justice in order to perform one's function well as rational beings who live with others, for humans are rational *and* social beings. According to Aristotle, only human beings have the conceptual and linguistic capacity to form moral judgements, for it is the human function of rationality that makes it possible for us to have a "sense of good and evil, just and unjust, etc." (*Pol.* 1253a1–18). In a more general way, *eudaimonia* can also be understood as

a matter of harmonising the rational and appetitive parts of the soul through reason, bringing both in alignment on the view of the good, and thus constituting *eudaimonia* (Scaltsas, 1996).

4.2.2 Aristotle's Objectivism about the Good

Aristotle's defence of objectivity and moral realism is based on his function argument.[148] The FA is Aristotle's naturalistic way to establish that the human good is objective and built into our nature as human beings. Significantly, the essential function of our species and our *telos* are mind-independent and objective because they are prescribed by the metaphysical principle of hylomorphic natural teleology, which relates to the metaphysical structure of our body and soul.[149] Our function and our *telos*, then, are not arbitrary creations of our will but are, instead, built into our nature.

Aristotle's metaphysical biology does not suggest that the fact that we possess a 'function' entails that we have some immanent purpose.[150] Scaltsas explains that Aristotle has identified in *Metaphysics* that in the case of human beings, formal cause (i.e. essence) and final cause (i.e. end) are the same *(Met.* 1044a34–b1), a position that is once again resonated in his *Physics* (*Phys.* 194a34–5).[151] This suggests that human beings are ends in themselves and that our species' purpose is human flourishing itself (Scaltsas, 1996:296). *Eudaimonia* for human beings is an *activity* which is realised in a specific way, i.e. in accord with the human function that is rationality. This position is therefore different from neo-Aristotelian interpretations that

[148] For discussions of the function argument, please see section 4.2.1.a.

[149] The soul of an organism is its form, which coincides with its final cause — its *telos* or natural end.

[150] Aristotle can accept that artefacts, arts, and bodily organs serve our natural ends or purposes. But the human function is not to serve a purpose in the same way that artefacts or body organs do or to perform some sort of an acquired or designated operation, as musicians or carpenters do.

[151] "We, too, are ends of a sort" (*Phys.* 194a34–5).

take the term 'function' to mean a 'characteristic way of living or acting', viz. 'how a thing does what it does' (Korsgaard, 2008:139).

However, 'function' also has the sense of 'achieving an outcome', which, here, would be *eudaimonia* and would occur through the exercise of the virtues. Aristotle "reasons that just as the best achievement of a sculptor will be a version of his ergon, which is a sculpture, so the best achievement of a human will be a version of his *ergon*, which is a certain activity of living" (Baker, 2015:228). So 'function' is both the *activity* and the *outcome* of this activity.[152] We can think, then, of 'function' as either a characteristic way of living (viz. with the guidance of rationality) or a characteristic life activity that generates flourishing (viz. with the guidance of rationality).

In either case, Aristotle builds his objectivist account of the good and virtue based on the characteristics that makes us distinctively humans, viz. the essential features of our humanness that is embodied in the human function. As Nussbaum explains, 'function' broadly refers to "features of humanness that lie beneath all local traditions and are there to be seen whether or not they are in fact recognised in local traditions" (Nussbaum, 1993:243). For example, these broad features can be realised in the fact that, in order to flourish, all humans appear to need to exercise well and strive to perfect their essences as rational and social beings with the unique capacity to make moral judgements about the good and the bad (*NE* I.7; *Pol*. I.2).

[152] For the idea that 'having a function' differs with what kind of being an X is; see Baker (2015).

4.2.3 Aristotle's Naturalism

a. Neo-Aristotelian Naturalists

Contemporary neo-Aristotelian naturalists do not accept teleology as the way to defend the objectivity of the virtues (Hursthouse and Pettigrove, 2018).[153] Instead, they argue that our biology or ethology determines the right *endoxa* about virtue. In contrast, I defend a view based on Aristotle's metaphysical biology, which understand human beings in the context of teleological commitments that are further based in metaphysics. Neo-Aristotelians replace Aristotle's purposeful teleology with biological reasoning concerning basic, natural ends. They claim that the goodness of an organism lies in whether it has the traits required to fulfill its species-specific, natural ends. For example, a cheetah that is fast is a good cheetah, for the trait of fastness enables the cheetah to be an effective hunter; a tree that has deep roots and is a good tree, for the trait enables the tree to be strong and sturdy, etc. Members with natural defects, however, such as a three-legged or slow cheetah would be considered poor specimens of their kind. On this conception, like the cheetah in the example, we humans need to possess certain species-specific traits in order to fulfill our ends and flourish:

> We invoke the same idea when we say that it is necessary for plants to have water, for birds to build nests, for wolves to hunt in packs, and for lionesses to teach their cubs to kill. These 'Aristotelian necessities' depend on what the particular species of plants and animals need, on their natural habitat, and the ways of making out that are in their repertoire. These things together determine what it is for members of a particular species to be as they should be, and to do that which they should do. And for all the enormous differences between the life

[153] Also see footnote 92.

> of humans and that of plants or animals, we can see that human defects and excellences are similarly related to what human beings are and what they do. (Foot, 2001:15)

With this view in mind, the good human being is a good specimen of its biological kind. On the neo-Aristotelian view, one is a good specimen of one's kind if one possesses, among other traits, the traditional moral virtues; the virtues are the traits which enable one to successfully meet one's natural ends of surviving, living long lives, being cooperative members of groups, avoiding suffering, and enjoying one's life with others (Hursthouse, 1999:202). Vicious people are naturally defective because, it is much more difficult for them to reach these biological ends. Thus, for the neo-Aristotelians, the virtues are objective because they are prescribed by what we need to become good members of our kind and flourish. In addition, lack of virtue compromises the prospect for us to meet our biological ends at the collective level. As Foot remarks:

> We all know enough to say, 'How could we get on without justice?', 'Where would we be if no one helped anyone else?', or 'How could we manage if there were no way of making decisions for us all?' Anyone who thinks about it can see that for human beings the teaching and following of morality is something necessary. We can't get on without it. (Foot, 2001:16–17)

> In short, the virtues are natural and necessary conditions of surviving and living well. (Foot, 1977:2–3)

Although FCVE is also neo-Aristotelian in the broader sense by sharing in the interpretation of character dispositions, excellence, and virtue, FCVE adopts a naturalistic teleological reading of Aristotle's ethical doctrine, which subscribes strongly to his metaphysical teleological biology that takes his function argument and account of the soul as central to the

understanding to *eudaimonia.* As such, FCVE holds that our biological ends, by themselves, do not in fact determine what sort of person we ought to be, what sort of actions we ought to take, or which ideals, way of life, and moral codes are good. For example, the so called 'Dark Triad'[154] traits in politics of are often *individually* beneficial in an adaptive and socially desirable manner, since they are associated with leadership and social success. Thus, the ends prescribed by our biological nature could not determine which traits are virtues or vices in a context-independent way. The neo-Aristotelians, then, will need to offer a further defence of their thesis that the biological ends of human nature *as such* entail human goodness in themselves.

b. Aristotle's Naturalism is not Biological

I suggest that we understand Aristotle's naturalism from the perspective of EP, which is the view that the good (i.e. *eudaimonia*) lies in 'perfecting' the *essential* features of our species.[155] On this understanding, *eudaimonia* is a species-wide drive that explains all relevant excellent actions – a final cause – but it is *not* a purely biological notion. Hence, Aristotle's ethical naturalism does *not* lie on a direct account of our biological nature, despite what many neo-Aristotelians have claimed.[156]

Before examining this claim in more depth, let us first endeavour to properly understand the 'natural' in Aristotelian naturalism. For Aristotle, the term 'nature' (*physis*) primarily refers to the 'essence' of things, their *telos*, and characteristic function. 'Nature', in his sense, does *not* imply automatically the 'natural' *qua* 'by nature' (*physei*). The 'natural', for Aristotle, is that which is either by nature (*physei*) or that which is in accordance with nature (*kata physin*) – in

[154] The 'Dark Triad' traits comprises of sociopathy, machiavellianism, and narcissism.

[155] See section 4.2.

[156] See discussion on Aristotle's naturalistic realism in section 4.2.4.

accord with its *telos*. Aristotle uses both senses of the 'natural'. First, the 'natural' is the product of teleology, which grows and functions without interference. For example, we are rational and political beings by nature (*physei*), the *polis* is 'natural' and there is 'natural' virtue. Second, the 'natural' is what accords with a thing's nature or *telos* ('*kata physin*').[157] In this sense, it is true that "in rational activity we are most truly what we are" (Broadie, 1991:35). Hence, the way we can actualise our designated end of *eudaimonia* is by living a life in accord with our nature (*kata physin*) – that is, by living a rational life.

Second, while Aristotle's naturalism is *not* a form of biological reductionism, biology *does* have two important roles to play within Aristotle's naturalism. First, it determines the traits and behaviors which are feasible to acquire and engage in: "the innate endowment of human beings must put limits on the shapings of second nature that are possible for them" (McDowell, 1998:190). Additionally, "first-natural facts can be part of what reflection takes into account. This is where we can register the relevance of what human beings need in order to do well, in a sense of 'doing well' that is not just Aristotle's 'acting in accordance with the virtues'" (1998:190). However, while rationality is the essence of human beings as natural creatures (our first nature), rationality is *also* the essence of our second nature. While our first nature is law-governed, our second nature is *not* strictly law-governed, since the 'space of reasons', according to McDowell, is not reducible to laws. We can give and demand reasons for actions using our reason, which presupposes that reason is not governed by laws. On the other hand,

[157] Aristotle uses both senses of the 'natural' in his ethics. For example, he states that the *telos* of the *polis* is the good life of all its members (*Pol.* I.1–2). A *polis* that fulfills its *telos* is good; while, if the *polis* serves the interests of a single person or an elite, then it is contrary to its 'nature' or *telos* and it is not good. Another instructive example of the 'natural' is the goodness of farming and barter (*Pol.* I.8–11). These ways of creating wealth are natural, says Aristotle, because they fulfil a natural end – that is, they are useful for the self-sufficiency, survival and the good life of the household. In contrast, trade-for-profit and moneylending are rightly condemned, according to Aristotle, because they unnaturally pervert the original telos of exchange, i.e. *usefulness* for the self-sufficiency of the household, in order to create profit.

the sciences conceive nature as governed by laws such that natural organisms are governed by biological necessity insofar as biology dictates certain imperatives, such as impulses, the need for food, water, etc. So, Aristotle's naturalism does not limit the 'natural' only to what is governed by the biological (and physical) 'laws of nature' because, as McDowell points out:

> If we identify nature with what natural science aims to make comprehensible, we threaten, at least, to empty it of meaning"; science leaves nature 'disenchanted' and in need of rescue. (1994:70–71)

This leads us to the second way in which biology bears on Aristotle's naturalism, insofar as it provides a developmental baseline for flourishing and virtue. According to this idea, flourishing pertains to the development of a maturational program which has a biological basis and provides a moral baseline – let us call such a concept the ethical baseline (EB) (Narvaez, 2015b). This is a biological idea based on epigenetics. Modern developmental psychology confirms that we are born with basic pre-moral and pro-social sensibilities and traits, which need proper development (Thompson, 2015 & 2016; Narvaez, 2015a & 2016), those who suscribe to EB suggest that positive parenting, for example, has epigenetic effects on pre-moral sensibilities and determines long-term flourishing (Thompson, 2015 & 2016; Emde, 2016; Narvaez, 2015a; 2016). Accordingly, modern science seems to support Aristotle's basic position that there are certain species-wide features (rational, social, and ethical), which need proper development. The function argument, then, can be considered to be compatible with the developmentalist idea of EB:

> Flourishing individuals have everything in good order…: social fittedness, self control, prosociality, practical intelligence, growth into wisdom, in-place moral inheritances of engagement and communal ethics. Flourishing necessarily encompasses other-regarding actions—feelings of gratitude, empathy, love, forgiveness and reverence, all

> require a receptive attitude which is only possible when one is not feeling threatened. When one undercares for babies, they build threat reactivity into their neurobiology…[O]ne does not return to or reach flourishing in the fullest sense ('wholeness') if one has been damaged earlier. (Narvaez, 2015b:258)

Therefore, according to developmental science, virtue and flourishing have objective conditions for arising on the basis of EB, which connects well to Aristotle's view on *eudaimonia*, as explained by Kristjánsson:

> according to Aristotle, it is empirically true that the wellbeing of human beings consists of the realization of intellectual and moral virtues and in the fulfilment of their other specifically human physical and mental capabilities. The virtues are at once conducive to and constitutive of *eudaimonia*; each true virtue represents a stable character state (*hexis*) that is intrinsically related to *eudaimonia*. (2007:15)

This maturational program, then, connects essential features of our humanity, i.e. rationality and social activity, with our flourishing. This suggests that there *are* some interpretations of the virtues which are true (because they meet the moral baseline) whereas others are false (because they do not). EB thus provides an objective standard for morality, although it cannot determine all of what is to be morally correct, since there is space beyond the baseline for cultural values.

4.2.4 Aristotle's Naturalistic Realism and The Naturalistic Fallacy

The function argument and its cogency has been widely assailed in the literature, with "nearly every premise and presupposition of the function argument ha[ving] been criticized" (Korsgaard, 2008:134). For example, there is the significant worry that the idea of a unique function, whose exercise exemplifies the good, is based on outdated biology, psychology, and

metaphysics. It might seem, instead, that individual human beings have various unique functions – some of us are athletic, others artistic, or religious. It might also appear odd for Aristotle to focus on *rationality* alone, instead of one of these other characteristics, or, metaphysically, for our rational nature to bear on what is moral.

In this section, I shall attempt to respond some of these worries, primarily by sketching how Aristotle's naturalism does *not* commit the naturalistic fallacy but instead, successfully provides a bridge for the 'is-ought' gap. The nutshell version of my response is, 'natural' for Aristotle not only refers to our biological nature, but also to that which is in accord with a thing's nature understood in terms of their teleology (essence), which in the case for human beings is flourishing achieved through excellent rational activity.[158] This defence relies heavily on Aristotle's teleological metaphysics and his essentialist biology, and provides a defence against critics who claim that ethical naturalists necessarily commit the naturalistic fallacy.

Aristotle's teleology seems to provide a clear, theoretical, connection between 'is' and 'ought'. On his view, the natural human good (*eudaimonia*) entails who we ought to be and how we ought to behave (i.e. virtuously). If teleology is the idea that every natural thing is goal-directed (on account of the things *ergon*) and has an immanent *telos,* then there is no purely descriptive fact in this realm; instead, every such description ends up containing an 'ought' as a matter of teleology. For instance, the sentence 'This is a knife' entails that 'it is sharp' *and* 'it ought to cut things' because everything ought to do its work by design.[159] Similarly, institutional facts, such as professional roles, will also entail 'oughts' (Annas, 2015). For instance, 'This is a police officer' entails 'she ought to serve and protect citizens'. Roles based on institutions provide a

[158] For discussion on Aristotle's meta-physical biology, see section 4.2.2.

[159] Scaltsas explains that the "role to which an artefact is put in society is the determining factor for what that artefact is. It determines the function of the artefact, and hence, its nature" (1996:295). However, this does not apply to the case for human beings, for human beings are ends in themselves.

clear connection between descriptive facts and 'oughts'. Thus, on this view, whatever (or whoever) fails to fulfill their teleology is acting against their nature. In the case of human beings, our *telos* prescribes what we need to flourish.

In light of the previously discussed theory of EB, which compares closely to the concept of "Aristotelian necessities" (Foot, 2001:15), it should now be clearer as to why and how the excellence of rational activity generates ethical considerations. Rationality underlies the mechanism and structures of all our intentional goal-directed activity. Aristotle wants to emphasise that only human beings, as a species, flourish in terms of rationality, i.e. by rationally managing our passions.[160] That is to say, only us humans can make moral judgements that pertain to the good and justice at the community level.

We need to be careful, again, though, because the 'natural' in Aristotle's naturalism does not refer only to our biological nature – i.e. it is not just concerned with the nature that we are born with – because nature is *not* moral as such. For Aristotle, biological nature on its own does not entail moral normativity. That is why our 'first nature' is not an object of moral evaluation. Instead, our biological (first nature) becomes moral once we acquire a 'second nature' through our ethical upbringing, namely, when we acquire the capacity to respond to moral reasons. Habituation 'opens our eyes' to the moral reality, as McDowell explains, as "acquiring a second nature brings the demands of reason into view" (1994:83). While we need rationality to grasp moral reasons, rationality is not itself a biological capacity; rather, it is the structure of intentional, goal-directed, action which is based on our biological capacity to reason. Nor is the human function any sort of natural psychological state (such as pleasure). Accordingly, virtues themselves, as Aristotle argues in *NE* II.1–3, are neither innate nor reducible to our

[160] See discussion on 'first nature' and 'second nature' in section 4.2.3.b.

biological nature. They are, instead, dispositions acquired through habituation. Hence, the virtues differ fundamentally from our natural tendencies and traits. The general purpose of habituation is to shape human biological nature in order to dispose us towards the good prescriptions of reason, which leads to flourishing. Nevertheless, successful habituation is not contrary to nature, since the virtues are fundamentally traits which *perfect* our nature.

Thus, for Aristotle, our ethical goodness and the normative moral 'oughts' derive not from our first, *but* from our second nature, stemming from the optimum development of our rational and moral propensities through proper habituation. The link between the natural and the moral lies in the fact that "Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is a radically moralized notion; it is impossible to achieve *eudaimonia* without being morally good – without actualizing the moral virtues" (Kristjánsson, 2007:15). This is how human nature is essentially linked with the ethical: in Aristotle's ethics, *eudaimonia* requires the optimum development of our second nature, i.e. the virtues.

4.3 FCVE's Pluralism: Defending Epistemological Objectivity

The purpose of this section is to defend the prospect of pluralism on account of Aristotle's contextualism about the good and virtue. FCVE can defend pluralism only on the basis of fulfilling the desiderata of epistemological objectivity. I suggest that this is best done by employing the following criterion about truth and justification: a belief about virtue is true if and only if it coheres with the *true* beliefs about *eudaimonia* (i.e. the truth criterion, TC).[161] Without this criterion, FCVE's pluralism would unacceptably collapse into relativism. Additionally, I believe that FCVE must adopt a soft form of realism which allows that the truth

[161] See section 4.1.

about virtue is objective insofar as it coheres with the true *endoxa* (i.e. true beliefs) about *eudaimonia*.[162]

However, this move relies on the thesis that truth lies in a correct *endoxa*. Although different cultures have different *endoxa* about the good, FCVE must show that the *endoxa* entail the truth about the good, which in turn entails the true interpretations of the virtues. This is the basis of FCVE's objectivity of the endoxic method, wherein coherentism based on rational acceptability is FCVE's method of truth and justification. Further, FCVE must refute the incommensurability thesis of relativism in order to defend pluralism within the confines of realism (i.e. uniqueness criterion, UC).[163] In order to accomplish this task, I employ Davidson's philosophy to flesh out the idea that the mere fact that there are multiple ways to interpret and realise the good in different circumstances should *not* be understood as evidence for relativity, but only for the claim that there are different ways to realise the objective truth of *eudaimonia*, which underpins our common moral framework and experiences. In particular, from the basis of Davidson's thesis on the inter-translatability of language schemes, which suggests that there are no incommensurable experiences (or conceptual frameworks), I propose that we can apply it to support the view that there is common framework underpinning the various moral discourses and codes concerning virtue. This suggests that the true interpretations of the virtues all share in the same grounding experiences, though in different contexts, thus satisfying the pluralist desideratum within the confines of realism (the UC).

[162] Note that this suggests that there can be both true *endoxa* and false *endoxa*. True *endoxa* would presumably include things like 'friendship is good', where it coheres *both* with other true beliefs in the system *and* with what is constitutive of *eudaimonia* on a correct understanding. However, there can also be false *endoxa*, such as beliefs that are racist or sexist, which – though they might cohere with true beliefs within a given system (thus satisfying TC) – they do *not* cohere with what is constitutive of *eudaimonia* on a correct understanding (thus preserving UC).

[163] See section 4.1.

4.3.1 The Motivation of Pluralism

Pluralism is the idea that there are multiple, true interpretations of virtue-concepts which are *equally* true because the true instantiations of the virtues offer appropriate responses to the requirements prescribed by *eudaimonia* but vary according to particular cultural contexts. In this way, Aristotle's doctrine of the mean supports a form of contextualism about virtue-concepts because it claims that moral truth should be understood as being relative (i.e. appropriate) to the circumstances and agents involved. Accordingly, Aristotle's view can satisfy the pluralist desideratum, that although the human function is objective and true, it does *not* dictate a unique or absolute way that works for all individuals in all circumstances to achieve *eudaimonia*. Such a rigid understanding of the human function would erroneously presuppose that human needs are fixed and that rationality is independent of them. Furthermore, despite there being a set of invariant needs (such as biological needs) and a set of rational ways to achieve them, this is decidedly not sufficient to establish the universal codification of virtue. As Putnam claims "humanity is constantly redesigning itself ... we create [our own] needs" (1987:79). Accordingly, human beings today require different things to meet our needs than from our ancestors to flourish. Thus, even granting some invariant needs, "whatever human needs there are that might be invariant across all cultures will not provide constraints strong enough to select a single moral code" (Timmons, 1991:386).

Further, societies adjust their values to their needs, commitments, and particular circumstances, such as external pressures, or other individuated sociological and historical contingencies. Due to the idiosyncrasies of such contingencies, it is extremely implausible that two different societies would flourish in identical ways. Since moral codes are meant to promote and protect what a society considers necessary for its own flourishing, and the needs and circumstances of societies are not likely to be identical, it follows that their moral codes would not be identical.

Instead, while some core components of moral codes should be cross-cultural if UC is to be upheld, other components should be unique to particular cultures, permitting pluralism.

In particular, the pluralism of these moral codes can be explained by the fact that societies interpret and realise cross-cultural norms and values in a variety of ways and that they rank and arrange such values in different ways in response to their particular needs and circumstances. If each society has its own *flourishing-equilibrium*, we cannot reasonably expect that there would be only one true set of values and only one true way for all societies to interpret and realise those that are cross-cultural. Accordingly, it should be expected that societies might have differing moral codes and interpretations of virtue-concepts. Instead, we should recognise that, if virtues are excellences whose realisations are constitutive of our flourishing, they should not involve the imposition of universal moral codes, since such a practice would not only be impractical but also alienating. As Williams rightly points out, the imposition of an absolute, impartial morality would most likely alienate us from our deeply held projects and commitments, which the virtues (in its relation to our choices and actions) should help us achieve (Williams, 1973). The force of the pluralist desideratum, then, is that each culture should be granted the permission to fashion and pursue its own system of true moral values in order to survive and authentically flourish.

4.3.2 FCVE and Epistemological Objectivity: Soft Realism

I argue that in order to defend TC, FCVE should, first of all, adopt the notion of epistemological objectivity of soft realism. FCVE holds that there are species-wide ethical facts about how human beings flourish – facts which are grounded in *eudaimonia* and which we learn from societal *endoxa*. Thus, FCVE's soft realist approach to objectivity must be one where true beliefs can be veridically gained through experience as opposed to being acquired by appeal to

further mind-independent facts.[164] Second, I contend that, in order to uncover the true *endoxa*, FCVE's method of justification must use coherentism as a test for truth but qualify it with a Davidsonian articulation of UC. Accordingly, its test for truth should be the following: a belief about virtue is true if and only if it coheres with true beliefs (*endoxa*) about the good. Further, the true beliefs *must* fit with experience.

a. Soft Realism and Objectivity: *Endoxa* as a Test for Truth

It is helpful to first examine the main idea of FCVE's soft realism, as expressed by Nussbaum:

> This, then – if we may characterize it for ourselves using language not known to Aristotle himself – is a kind of realism, neither idealism of any sort nor skepticism. It has no tendency to confine us to internal representations, nor to ask us to suspend or qualify our deeply grounded judgments. It is fully hospitable to truth, to necessity (properly understood), and to a full-blooded notion of objectivity. It is not relativism, since it insists that truth is one for all thinking, language-using beings. It is a realism, however, that articulates very carefully the limits within which any realism must live. (1986:257)

Nussbaum here argues that, like contemporary soft realists, Aristotle does not find it intelligible that we could ever cognise reality independently of our deeply grounded judgements, viz. the *endoxa*. That is, Aristotle does not seem to find any opposition between the world of experience – i.e. the *endoxa* about virtue and the good – and reality and truth – i.e. the ethical facts and truths about how we ought to live, what traits and goals we ought to develop, etc. In other

[164] For instance, if my hands recoil from a hot surface, that the surface is hot should not be further confirmed through epistemic intermediaries or conceptual schemes. Instead, my veridical *experience* that the surface is hot should be sufficient to confirm that it is objectively true that the surface is hot.

words, he trusts that ethical truth does not lie outside the world of opinion (*doxa*) and experience (i.e. that there is no 'external viewpoint').

For Aristotle, the objectivity of morality is defensible from within the world of the *endoxa* since he trusts that the right *endoxa* entails truth. On the other hand, his contextualism suggests that, nevertheless, different *endoxa* can be right in terms of their different contents, given that each culture's *endoxa* are adapted to their specific circumstances. However, Aristotle's pluralistic doctrine is *not* a concession to relativism but is, rather, an alternative approach to objectivity. As McDowell (1994) has argued, mind-independence, the theory subscribing to a scientific view of the world, is *not* the only way of being objective. The manifest image of the world,[165] the world of ordinary experience, are alternative glosses of objectivity, which suggests that something is objective if we have a *veridical* experience of it. Colors are objective in the veridical sense on this view because our response to things as having colors is veridical. For McDowell, moral values are like colors; their existence is objective despite their objectivity partly depends on subjects' responses. We can therefore come to know truths in subject-dependent domains of reality, albeit only from within a particular perspective while, nevertheless, avoiding the collapse into relativism.

FCVE's approach to epistemological objectivity does not have to presuppose a radical opposition between appearance (the world of opinion and ordinary experience) and reality (such as Plato's Forms). Such a hard realist approach, I believe, too strongly divorces truth and reality from the world of opinion and experience (*endoxa*), resulting in the negative implication that the world of our ordinary experience is merely a projection, something which seems to be "more than slightly crazy" (Putnam, 1987:3–4). FCVE's soft realist approach to

[165] This is a theory put forth by Sellars (1962) that suggests there is the world as described by science (Scientific Image), and the world as it appears to us, (the Manifest Image).

epistemological objectivity can avoid this conclusion by accepting the idea that the human mind is an interpretative instrument rather than a mirror of an external reality.

Putnam and Davidson have convincingly argued that there is no such thing as an uninterpreted, mind-independent reality to which our minds either fit (in cases in which we get things right) or fail to fit (in cases in which we get things wrong). Putnam, for example, attacks the hard realist's assumption about objectivity and says that we could never have the 'God's-eye view' of reality (1981:55–56), viz. knowledge of 'things in themselves' or of 'intrinsic' properties. In addition, Davidson (1973; 2001a) very convincingly rejects the dichotomy between the empirical content of the world and ourselves, by appeal to our conceptual schemes and languages. If what we mean and what is true are interdependent, then to force a distinction between language and meaning on the one hand and empirical content on the other seems largely unintelligible. Accordingly, Davidson's work brings the truths about empirical content back together to our experience and language as a whole persuasively demonstrating that objective truth is interwoven with our experience and language.

4.3.3 Davidson's Response to Relativism

While we admit that the grounding experiences (of moral agents) are partly culturally constructed, this is not an argument against objectivity because, as Putnam and Davidson argue, the idea of unmediated experience is hardly intelligible (Nussbaum, 1993). In particular, the fact that grounding experiences are culturally constructed does not prove that we live in incommensurable schemes, and that there are no single, objective answers to the questions posed in each sphere of experience. Even if the grounding experiences *were* mediated by conceptual schemes (such as language schemes), Davidson's work still suggests that the different experiences are inter-translatable because they can be effectively communicated and

translated, something which *presupposes* the fact that speakers share the experience of a common world.

For Davidson, if the function of conceptual schemes is to organise reality (viz. to structure empirical content), then there must be some common reality which each language or scheme organises – even if each scheme organises reality in a different way. And if there *is* a common reality, then convergence of beliefs about reality becomes possible. This idea is based on his account of the doctrine of radical interpretation.[166] In particular, radical interpretation is interpretation of an unfamiliar alien language from scratch, by observing how a speaker of that language uses it in the context of use, without getting help from dictionaries, translators, or bilingual persons. Davidson explains that radical interpretation is possible because of the principle of charity:

> Charity is forced on us; – whether we like it or not, if we want to understand others, we must count them right in most matters. If we can produce a theory that reconciles charity and the formal conditions for a theory, we have done all that could be done to ensure communication. Nothing more is possible, and nothing more is needed. We make maximum sense of the words and thoughts of others when we interpret in a way that optimizes agreement (this includes room, as we said, for explicable error, i.e., differences of opinion). (2001a:197)

Radical interpretation requires that interpreters attribute true beliefs to the speaker of the alien language and that they attribute beliefs and desires to the speaker, coherence of beliefs, and rationality in meeting their desires. In a more general way, interpreters need to assume that the speaker's words and utterances have meaning and, hence, truth – particularly because truth is

[166] The radical interpretation doctrine is a philosophical abstraction which looks into what is understood when we understand speech and action by looking what is involved in the interpretation of an alien language.

interwoven with linguistic meaning. The upshot of Davidson's radical interpretation doctrine is that, since the interpreter understands the words made in a different language by attributing true beliefs to the speaker of the alien language, it therefore follows that the claims expressed in that language are *translatable* into the interpreter's language. Hence, there are apparently no *untranslatable* languages or conceptual schemes.[167]

A further implication of this doctrine is that we share a common objective world, and that belief is veridical, which is why most of the beliefs about our shared world referred by in the language are true. In particular, in order to understand a word of the alien language, an interpreter needs to share with the speaker an experience of the entities or events which are being referred to by the speaker's word. Accordingly, the doctrine implies the possibility of an intersubjective world and intersubjective truth, which when applied to the Aristotelian context, we can take to mean the idea of being species-prevalent, wherein members of the same species can be taken to share a set of common objective experiences. The fact that language is translatable and that we have a shared experience of the world indicates both that truth is unique and is *not* relative as well as that, further, most of the basic beliefs about this shared world expressed in languages are true.

A variant of Davidson's radical interpretation argument is his doctrine of triangulation, which suggests that, in order for two speakers to communicate or interact linguistically, they must share a world. This transcendental argument again supports the ideas of an objective world, the veridicality of belief, and, thus, a unique truth. In particular, triangulation is based on the idea that successful communication requires that two individuals (the speaker and the interpreter)

[167] Note that languages do not have to be restricted to spoken foreign languages (such as Greek, English, French etc). Instead, it could be expanded to be understood more generally as how we communicate – including body language, gestures, and emotions. On Davidson's view even these mannerisms are translatable, for members of that species.

share beliefs and that these beliefs cannot but be caused by the same objects and events. In other words, the fact that we do communicate implies that we respond in similar ways to the same features (objects and events) of the world. As Davidson says, "communication begins where causes converge: your utterance means what mine does if belief in its truth is systematically caused by the same events and objects" (1983:151). So, triangulation is the idea that communication requires a triangle: a speaker, an interpreter, and a shared world.

Like in radical interpretation, triangulation demonstrates that communication between two people requires a shared experience of the same world. This is significant because basic beliefs about the world cannot but be veridical or true since the interpreter would not be able to understand a word unless she shared an experience of the world (i.e. the objects or events in the world) with the speaker. Successful communication, therefore, presupposes that the shared world is objective and that our beliefs about the shared world are mostly true (Davidson 1987). In evaluating the conclusions of these arguments, Davidson wonders where this leaves the case for conceptual relativism:

> The answer is…that we must say much the same thing about differences in conceptual scheme as we say about differences in belief: we improve the clarity and bite of declarations of difference, whether of scheme or opinion, by enlarging the basis of shared (translatable) language or of shared opinion…[W]e have found no intelligible basis on which it can be said that schemes are different. (Davidson, 2001a:197)

Hence, it appears that translatability convincingly indicates that conceptual schemes are based off our shared experience of the world, since even disagreements between schemes serve to illuminate just how much is shared between them conceptually and ontologically in order that a coherent quibble can be elucidated. Having shown that there are no untranslatable languages,

Davidson then argues that there cannot be totally incommensurable belief systems because true beliefs can be shared and translated by speakers of different languages. Hence, in principle, truth is unique and there are no incompatible belief systems.

At this point, I think it may be helpful for us to pause and take stock. On the one hand, the absolutist (the hard realist) believes that there is a unique version of reality but (I think) wrongly assumes a dichotomy between conceptual scheme and reality, forcing her to conclude that reality could be cognised independently of a conceptual scheme – otherwise, truth would not be entirely agent and belief-independent. On the other hand, the relativist also assumes this conceptual scheme and reality dichotomy but thinks that this suggests that there cannot be a 'unique' reality, thinking instead that truth is bound to multiple *untranslatable* schemes or viewpoints. For Davidson, in contrast to these two views, believes that there is no such thing as an 'uninterpreted reality' or incommensurable conceptual schemes. Instead, the world is (largely) unstructured content which we structure using a language. But triangulation and radical interpretation show that we, as a human species, share a common ontology and the same beliefs about the world and, therefore, share a unique truth. Thus, Davidson rejects the very idea of isolated conceptual schemes, i.e. different untranslatable and incommensurable conceptions of reality.

According to Davidson's work, then, our common grounding experiences can be best explained by the fact that there is a common ontology. This is also likely the case because human beings have a common nature, which enables us to share in the same (or at least relevantly similar) grounding experiences with other members of our species. Since our individual grounding experiences are inter-translatable, there should be true interpretations of the same virtue-concept, as well as objectively false interpretations. For instance, Davidson's work will not allow for absolute relativism: torturing innocent people for fun cannot be right in any culture

whatsoever. A culture in which 'torturing for fun' is thought to be true would, in fact, be wrong because these beliefs would not cohere with the true *endoxa* about *eudaimonia*. An important implication of Davidson's work is that true *endoxa* about the good should be global or (at least) species-prevalent: since all languages and cultures share in a common ontology, there is a unique truth.

Furthermore, as Davidson suggests, the most-basic beliefs about the world are true in all languages since truth is veridical and languages are inter-translatable in virtue of our experience of a common reality. Hence, it is no accident that we all value certain goods – such as life, justice, love, trust, family, friendship, knowledge, and so on. All societies converge on a set of similar norms in order to protect these goods, most evidently by proscribing against acts such as theft, murder, and rape. If moral codes were not translatable based on a shared nature, this common ground would not be possible.

One might still wonder about the way in which we could come to know the *true* endoxa. However, on Davidson's causal theory of belief, most basic beliefs about the world are veridical because they are based on sensations caused by objects and events of the world. While communication between different moral codes is possible based on a common moral ontology – as the global *endoxa* and the grounding experiences evince – moral beliefs are *not* veridical in the same perceptual way that colors and objects are veridical. That is likely behind the reason why, despite having the same grounding experiences and a shared set of common moral norms, there nevertheless still are wide-ranging moral disagreement between societies or even individuals over what constitutes murder, theft, rape, etc. In order to fulfil the epistemic objectivity desideratum, FCVE needs an epistemic method in order to justify true beliefs and weed out wrong interpretations. I turn now to propose just such a method.

4.3.4 Coherentism and the UC as a Method

I suggest that we can take the global *endoxa* (the coherence and overlap of *endoxa* between different societies) as the basic set of true beliefs against which we can test the truth of less basic and non-global *endoxa*. While it must be admitted that the truth-status of even global endoxa is not guaranteed,[168] I believe that the convergence of multiple societies on a set of global *endoxa* is strong evidence that these societies have all discovered a number of truths about flourishing – a set which effectively delimits the range in how the more idiosyncratic endoxa could and should be interpreted. These common truths can be explained by the fact that there is a baseline for flourishing grounded in human nature, as discussed above, and I believe that we can take these truths about flourishing as the true beliefs for the endoxic method.

Since truth is interwoven with experience and language, my proposal is that FCVE's endoxic approach to epistemological objectivity should employ the Davidsonian truth theory that "beliefs are true if they capture how things are in the world (in the only way things can be, the way they are given to experience)" (Scaltsas, 1989:146) as the basis for the test for truth. This approach to truth as dealing with fit with the experience of reality instead of fit with a mind-independent reality, supports the endoxic method of FCVE. In particular, this approach fleshes out Aristotle's thesis that the right *endoxa* – opinion and veridical experience – entail truth. Thus, it is only by departing from the hard realist's correspondence test of truth, that FCVE is capable of successfully sustaining the endoxic method.

[168] When evaluating the concept of global *endoxa*, we also need to be sensitive to the socio-economic background in which they arise. For example, while homosexuality might be considered wrong in the past on the global *endoxa*, this recognition has been corrected based on the further avancement in knowledge brought on by various progresses made in society, just as society has also corrected for racism, sexism and other such discriminatory attitudes.

Hard realism's commitment to the mind-independence thesis of things 'in themselves', such as Plato's extra-sensory Forms, requires the correspondence test, which holds that "beliefs are true if they capture how things are in the world, as things are independently of any experience" (Scaltsas, 1989:146). Such a test leads to the unintelligible demand of discovering moral truth apart from our experience. In contrast, coherentism tests for truth in the very environment that it pertains – the world of experience and belief. For example, truth pertaining to my health does not require considerations outside my body – my feeling poorly concerns factors that resides in my body, such the presence of viruses attacking my immune system, as opposed to being an act of God. Nevertheless, FCVE must further qualify the coherentist test with the Davidsonian criterion that a belief about virtue is true if and only if it coheres with *true* beliefs (*endoxa*). These true beliefs about virtue are beliefs about *eudaimonia,* because virtue is necessary in order to realise the human function and achieve *eudaimonia*, given one's particular circumstances. Hence, the truth value regarding virtue is always underpinned by what *eudaimonia* requires, since the moral status of an action is derived from its fit with eudaimonist teleology.

Thus, while FCVE must apply coherence as a test for truth, it must also be capable of avoiding beliefs in bad things and, therefore, must have a way to test for the true beliefs about *eudaimonia*. We must, therefore, investigate a way in which we could justify the truth-status of these foundational beliefs about *eudaimonia*. Thus, on the one hand, FCVE should demonstrate that beliefs are true because they fit with experience and standards of rationality (the TC). However, on the other hand, FCVE must further adopt a realist methodology of justification in order to show that these beliefs are also objective, i.e. that there is a *unique* answer to be found in questions about the good (the UC). I propose that the way in which we can discover true beliefs (*endoxa*) about the good is require that these *endoxa* also satisfy – or

that we are rationally justified in believing that they satisfy – the 'coherence and fit' criteria, which Putnam explains as follows:

> What makes a statement, or a whole system of statements – a theory or conceptual scheme – rationally acceptable is, in large part its coherence and fit; coherence of "theoretical" of less experiential beliefs with one another and with more experiential beliefs, and also coherence of experiential beliefs with theoretical beliefs. (1981:54–5)

Rational acceptability is thus "guided by certain desiderata e.g. the feasibility, ideality, and width of appeal of practical norms" (Timmons, 1991:383). For example, rational acceptability might seek whether it is *ideally* rational to believe certain *endoxa*, such as the *endoxon* which supports violence as a form of entertainment (i.e. gladiator fighting). Appealing to Putnam's first criterion for rational acceptability, we can proceed by testing whether the distress that the gladiators experience constitutes enjoyable entertainment – at a theoretical level, the concept of the gladiators' distress does not cohere to anything we might recognise to be pleasurable; this shows that this *endoxon* is not rationally acceptable.

Putnam's second criterion tests for coherence of experience; thus, we can test for people's experiences with violence and whether they find violence towards themselves enjoyable. If they do not, then it would not be rationally acceptable to find violence applied to either themselves or others as enjoyable, which, again, means on an experiential level, the rational acceptability of this experience cannot be tenured. The final criterion requires that the theoretical level fit with the experiential level in order to lead to rational acceptability; since 'violence as entertainment' is not acceptable on either level, it stands to reason that the theoretical and experiential levels cohere, which gives us the conclusion that 'violence as entertainment' is not rationally acceptable.

This idea of rational acceptability can be applied to FCVE by suggesting that, provided that holding a true belief for X would entail choosing X, the belief that 'violence for entertainment' is not rationally acceptable just in case the fully rational person would not choose to do it. This is because the fully rational person is not someone with mere procedural rationality but, rather, the ideally rational person would have *phronesis*, which grounds procedural rationality with a commitment to *eudaimonia*. *Phronesis* is knowledge of the (eudaimonically) correct goals, i.e. reasoning in line with *eudaimonia* such that the ideally rational person (the *phronimos*) would pursue only real, objectively true, goods. Accordingly, the true *endoxa* are those that would be ideally rational to hold.

A further desideratum of accepting a belief as true is its fit with experience, since it is not rational to accept a claim that fails to fit with experience. Aristotle states:

> the truth in practical matters is judged on the basis of the facts and of life. For they are authoritative in these matters. One should examine what was said earlier by bringing it up against the facts [*erga*] and life, and if they harmonize with the facts, one must accept it, but if they are out of harmony, then one must reject one's statements. (*NE* 1179a17–22)

Following Aristotle, fit with experience in ethics requires that the objectivity of ethics and of moral claims ought to fit the facts of life relating to happiness.

It should be admitted that philosophers who reject the content-scheme dualism of correspondence-type theories – such as the realist accounts of Aristotle, Davidson, Putnam, and McDowell – might point out that we cannot justify or verify our claims independently of our concepts, experience, and reason. However, as Putnam states, rational acceptability is the most that we can appeal to, to scrutinise our beliefs:

> Our conceptions of coherence and acceptability are, on the view I shall develop, deeply interwoven with our psychology. They depend upon our biology and our culture; they are by no means 'value free'. But they are our conceptions, and they are conceptions of something real. They define a kind of objectivity, objectivity for us, even if it is not the metaphysical objectivity of the God's Eye view. (1981:55–6)

Further, the fact that rationality is intertwined with historical and cultural contingencies does not invite relativism because, as Putnam hints, rationality is partly a biological product.[169] In fact, recent work in cognition shows that human beings share a common epistemic, cognitive apparatus. This suggests that, despite our differences in conceptual schemes, some representations of reality are more veridical and rationally acceptable than others: "The conceptual schemes mediating our understanding of the world, therefore, are not merely contingent cultural products but, to an important extent, necessary biological products" (Vlerick, 2014:281). While this may not satisfy strong realists, who might see this as an intraspecies account of realism, my response is that desiring more objectivity than it is possible to be objective-for-us would be too far-fetched and certainly so for a subject matter that pertains to something as elusive as human practical activity. This, I believe, leads us back to soft realism.

4.4 Conclusion: Objectivist Pluralism

It seems, then, that there are plural true beliefs about the good and the virtues (desideratum for pluralism) but that there is also a shared moral ontology, i.e. the grounding experiences, and one true set of basic beliefs about the good (i.e. the global *endoxa*) in which all cultures share (desideratum for realism). This set of truths about the good restricts virtue pluralism and allows

[169] A similar idea can be found in McDowell's theory of second nature.

moral criticism and normative progress. In this regard, we are able to pass judgment on cultures that interpret *endoxa* in a way that falls outside of the acceptable limits in terms of the objectivity of *endoxa,* such as a cultural *endoxa* that supports violence for entertainment. If a culture held that such a thing was right, then the burden of proof would be on that culture to demonstrate how this could cohere rationally with the global *endoxa* about *eudaimonia* and certain relevant established facts about it. However, it seems that, in this case, such coherence could hardly be achieved, since enough of any moral system's basic beliefs are true and are shared with other systems in virtue of a common ontology and a common nature. Accordingly, upon rational reflection and criticism every culture can refine wrong or false *endoxa* over time and achieve moral dialogue and progress, by conforming to the global *endoxa*. The limits to pluralism, then, are found in the objectivity that Davidson's metaphysics and Aristotle's *eudaimonia* can provide.

CHAPTER 5: Naturalising Ethical Perception

In this chapter I examine the epistemology and empirical status of FCVE's developmental account of ethical perception against the backdrop of the psychological sciences. Ethical perception is a cornerstone of FCVE's moral epistemology: for in the absence of codifiable, context-independent moral principles, FCVE relies on the virtuous agent to deliver correct moral judgement on what is right or wrong. Correct moral judgement, in turn, must rely on good ethical perception – i.e. the ability to notice moral salience in situations.

Ethical perception has been discussed in different capacities. From the theoretical viewpoint of moral philosophy and moral psychology, Aristotelians understand ethical perception as occupying the middle ground between emotivist theories, such as Hume's, and rationalist theories, such as Kant's. Notwithstanding McDowell's (1998) intellectualist interpretation, which asserts ethical perception as a kind of sensitivity towards moral reasons, most Aristotelians hold that ethical perception has both affective and cognitive basis (Sherman, 1989).

From the empirical viewpoint of the psychological sciences, emotivism about moral judgement and perception is best represented by emotion-based intuitionist models, such as Haidt's Social Intuitionist Model (SIM) (Haidt, 2001;2012), whereas rationalism about moral judgement and perception is best understood on reasoning-based models, such as that of Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Development (SMD) (Kohlberg, 1981). However, the Aristotelian position on moral judgement and perception seem to be best represented by neo-Kohlbergian integrative models such as Rest's Four Component Model of Morality (FCM) (Rest and Narvaez, 1995). First, FCM re-conceptualises ethical perception as moral sensitivity (MS), where emotions are integrated with cognitive functions and states, such as reasoning and evaluative beliefs. This lends support to the distinctly Aristotelian account of *hexeis* as reason-responsive states and

refutes the emotivist claim that reasoning is exclusively post-hoc. Second, FCM views moral judgment, of which MS is one of its four components, as analogous to skill. This resonates with Aristotle's doctrine of habituation, which holds that the virtues are acquired and cultivated through practice – viz. we acquire virtues in the way we acquire skills.

While I agree with the neo-Kohlbergian integrative models by sharing their view that emotions have cognitive functions in noticing moral salience, I argue in this chapter that their skill analogy does not adequately elucidate the full function of ethical perception, even when it is re-conceptualised as MS in FCM. Instead, based on Lacewing's (2015a) work on evaluative sensibility (ES), I develop FCVE's model of ethical perception, which asserts that noticing moral salience is not a value neutral function, like skill, because noticing moral salience requires the evaluation of moral cues based on the beliefs about the good (namely, the intellect) that inform the agent's affective sensibility (namely, ethical character).

On account of the many conceptual similarities between Lacewing's ES and FCVE's interpretation of Aristotle's account of ethical perception, and the empirical cogency of Lacewing's model, I will take Lacewing's ES model as the empirical basis to develop my account of FCVE's moral epistemology. My aim is to show that the structures of the psychological self, proposed by Lacewing, can be mapped onto the structures of the Aristotelian soul in which the *hexeis* can be understood as the ethical self or character. To a large extent, the robustness (and credibility) of FCVE account is determined by how well its description of the function and development of the *hexeis* maps onto current empirical psychology, or so I argue. In effect, I examine how on FCVE, moral knowledge is achieved by

ringing the *hexeis* into good condition, through which we develop and acquire better ethical perception (as ES) that informs good or virtuous moral judgements.[170]

In section one, I first present an account of the conceptual similarities between FCVE and ES in order to establish a clear working definition and model of FCVE's moral epistemology. I proceed to engage with the current debate that lies at the intersection of philosophy and psychology, which concerns the role that the respective fields of study play in the theorising of moral development and epistemology – whether they are best grounded in a "moralised psychology" or a "psychologised morality" (Carr, 2007). I defend a position, whereby I appeal to empirical evidence in order to substantiate and complement the moral psychology of FCVE, but without reducing FCVE's epistemic norms regarding good ethical perception into psychology. In section two, I discuss current perceptual models of moral epistemology and give reasons for my preference and adoption of the ES model as a close empirical psychology ally to FCVE. In the third section, I present FCVE's model of developmental moral epistemology and examine its epistemological, developmental, and psychological robustness against the backdrop of contemporary psychology.

5.1 Psychologised Morality or Moralised Psychology?

In this section I first discuss how FCVE's conception of ethical perception maps onto the empirical positions put forth in the ES model, to establish an empirical working model for further analysis. To examine the empirical status of FCVE's moral epistemology, it must not

[170] Lacewing and Aristotle connect ethical perception with different notions of the good. The former is subjectivist and glosses it by reference to truthfulness and authenticity inspired by Williams' philosophy, while Aristotle glosses the good in terms of *eudaimonia*. Nevertheless, it is possible to read them as complementary: that truthfulness leads to better self-understanding, for when one is truthful about one's motivations, it also reveals our true values. The notion of self-understanding could be understood in terms of the internal coherence of the soul in Aristotelian terms. Cohesion of the soul is achieved when the *hexeis* stand in good condition to the good, supported by practical wisdom also aiming for the good, such that there is coherence between the two parts of the soul, for they both aim at *eudaimonia*.

only be shown that it FCVE's conception can be 'translated' into empirical psychological model of ES, but also that FCVE's theoretical conceptions can also be 'naturalised'. Therefore, I proceed to engage with the debate of 'psychologised morality or moralised psychology?', where my aim is to answer the following question: 'To what extent is FCVE justified in using empirical evidence as the basis of its developmental model of moral epistemology?'

5.1.1 Evaluative Sensibility, Ethical Perception, and Moral Sensitivity: A Developmental Account of Moral Epistemology

Moral philosophers have long recognised the importance of ethical perception in moral judgment (e.g. Sherman, 1989). Likewise, psychologists have provided findings, which show that ethical perception is a necessary component of moral agency and decision-making. As Rest's well received Four-Component Model of Morality (FCM) suggests, ethical perception or (1) moral sensitivity (MS) is the starting point of moral decision-making and agency. FCVE's ethical perception broadly overlaps with Rest's MS, which involves "moral perception (noticing a need or problem), moral imagination (interpreting events), and empathic response" (Narvaez, 2010:82). MS is identified as the starting point in moral decision-making because moral judgement cannot not get off the ground without the agent first recognising moral salience, i.e. that there is a moral situation at hand. It is therefore the most important component as it informs the other three components:[171] without ethical perception noticing a moral problem

[171] Here are the four components of Rest's Model (Narvaez and Rest, 1995):

(a) **Moral Sensitivity**. This ability involves of "moral perception (noticing a need or problem), moral imagination (interpreting events), and empathic response" (Narvaez, 2010:82).
(b) **Moral Judgement**. This is the "capacity to consider the merit of alternative reasons and options for action" (Narvaez, 2010:82).
(c) **Motivation or Focus**. "Once a person has noticed a problem and imagined possibilities (moral sensitivity) and judged which action to take, the person must prioritize the action over other interests and goals in order to move toward carrying it out" (Narvaez, 2010:83).
(d) **Moral Action (or Implementation)**. "After an action has been prioritized, the individual must have the wherewithal and ego strength to carry it out" (Narvaez, 2010:83).

or need, there is no input for (2) making a moral judgement, (3) acquiring a motive, which culminates in (4) taking action.

As I will show in section three, the recognitional role of FCVE's ethical perception lies in the *hexeis*: our character determines how we see things and whether we see aright. On FCVE, the ability to notice moral salience is both an interpretative and sensitising process. When the *hexeis* stand in a good condition in relation to the appetites and emotions (i.e. in a mean), we become sensitive to moral salience by 'feeling' moral salience. Of course, feelings must be amenable to reason's interpretation of moral cues in order for us to notice moral salience correctly.[172] Hence, ethical perception on FCVE involves both emotion and intellect, and is defined in terms of the *hexeis* broadly as 'the ability to make ethical appraisals', which involves recognition, interpretation and sensitivity.

On this definition, the Aristotelian *hexeis,* in comparison to traditional accounts of MS, is closer to the notion of evaluative sensibility (ES) in Lacewing's ESM of ethical perception. Lacewing defines ES as "sensitivity to the moral salience of particulars – specific events, contexts or properties" (Lacewing, 2015a:335), such that the agent recognises that a moral situation exists and that it merits a moral response. So, much like MS in FCM, Lacewing' account also holds ethical perception to involve the functions of recognition, interpretation, and sensitivity. However, Lacewing integrates the perceptive function of MS into an account of the self's evaluative scheme. In ESM, he develops the account of ES with the theory of 'social-cognitive units' of personality traits (CAPS model; Michel and Shoda, 1995), which he takes to underpin the psychological structure of the self. In this way, Lacewing's model lays claim to empirical basis. Moreover, ES is an improvement on MS, for MS seems to understand ethical perception

[172] As I show in 5.3, reason (or intellect) interprets cues based on an evaluative scheme (viz. a conception of the good and ethical beliefs).

as a value-neutral modality, whereas ES, by establishing the link between perception and the self's evaluative scheme, understands perception as an evaluative sensibility of feelings, which is able to account for why the recognitional capacity of perception is evaluative.[173] According to ES, perception is understood as 'judgment-sensitive-attitudes' based on emotions (Lacewing, 2014). Thus, while the 'S' in MS stands for sensitivity, the 'S' in ES stands for sensibility, for on ES, there is an additional component of evaluation. Likewise, the *hexeis* also connect ethical perception with emotion's evaluative properties and the intellect's evaluative scheme, such that ethical perception is a function of the self as both a psychological and evaluative structure. Ultimately, the self is not a neutral structure but an ethical structure in virtue of our species drive towards the good.

Furthermore, because of this added evaluative dimension, both ES and EP understand ethical perception as being part of the moral agent's identity as opposed to the case of MS, which understands ethical perception as being a skill that is exercised by the agent among other skills. Since our skills do not define of who we are, Lacewing believes that there is therefore no assimilation of the information perceived to the self in the case of MS (2015a). Whereas, on the ES model, the assimilation of information – which includes moral knowledge – takes place at the level of the psychological self which is centrally an evaluative or ethical self. In the case of EP, the assimilation of ethical information happens at the *hexeis* level, where moral knowledge is assimilated into one's conception of the good (viz. one's evaluative scheme).

Lacewing points out that this point of distinction holds further theoretical implications that highlight the advantages of ES models over MS. The first is that, on perceptual models that

[173] On MS, moral perception (the first of the three parts of moral sensitivity) is not connected to feelings. This makes it mysterious as to how moral perception notices value without being itself evaluative. In other words, I hold the view that in order to notice moral salience and moral value, moral perception needs to have an evaluative function, viz. it must have evaluative nature because noticing moral salience is based on emotions; the emotions are evaluations.

take MS as its basis, ethical error is often understood as a perceptual mistake. However, Lacewing contests that on such a view ethical criticism cannot not "gain traction" (2015a), for we cannot meaningfully hold someone responsible to their actions if they committed an error of perception (as opposed to an error of judgement). Second, MS models overlook empirical research in the field of psychology, which has recently observed the (prominent) role of the self in generating errors resulting from automatic implicit processes.[174] In this sense, one advantage of Lacewing's and FCVE's models is that their respective evaluative accounts of moral epistemology examine the factors that distort the good condition of ES and EP, which impedes the good functioning of the psychological self, or *hexeis*, hence offers redress to such worries. Lastly, by assimilating the epistemic role of ethical perception with the evaluative self, FCVE and ES maintain the link between moral knowledge and the good life: good ethical perception is achieved on the basis of correct understanding of ethical information, which in turn is based on good self-understanding (or *hexeis*), which makes it possible to have a correct view of the good.[175] The leading theoretical idea of the chapter is Lacewing's view that good ethical perception (which is the perspective condition on the ES model), ultimately, requires truthfulness with oneself. Being truthful to oneself corresponds to Aristotle's notion of coherence between the two parts of the soul that stands in relation to *eudaimonia*, where both parts of the soul align (to the good).

The table below shows the respective competencies of ES, EP, and MS:

	Evaluative Sensibility (Lacewing's Model)	Ethical Perception (FCVE Account)	Moral Sensitivity (Rest's Model)

[174] One way in which the self can generate error is in terms of the agent's automatic processes, such as heuristics, biases, or defence and coping mechanisms.

[175] The idea is that one cannot obtain a correct view of the good if one deceives oneself about one's intentions, motives, and desires.

Perception Condition	Perception in ES is understood as 'judgement-sensitive attitudes', where emotions and values are the primary source of evaluation.	Perception in FCVE is exercised through the *hexeis*, involving both emotion and intellect.	Perception in MS is understood separately from emotion, perhaps as a cognitive process.
Perspective Condition	There are factors that can distort the ES, such as automatic, implicit processes that influence our evaluative thoughts and emotions. A distorted ES, leads to a skewed perception of situations. Correcting distortions restores good perception.	When the *hexeis* stand in good condition in relation to our appetites, we are able to perceive well, i.e. in accordance to the good. When the *hexeis* do not stand in good condition in relation to our apetites, we are unable to perceive well.	When we fail to perceive moral salience, it is regarded as a perceptual error.
Knowledge Condition	ES involves both emotions and rationality: Emotions are the source of judgment-sensitive attitudes that are responsive to the values and commitments that the self holds.	Virtue is a unitary state, thus the *hexeis* further engages with *phronesis* (practical wisdom)	Knowledge in MS relate to elementary moral concepts, such as moral rules of thumb.

	These values and commitments are an extension of the self, which reveal and express an agent's self-knowledge.		
Reciprocity Condition	An agent's value-judgements inform her emotions, but emotions themselves are judgement-sensitive attitudes that can in turn inform her judgements.	For Aristotle, the work of *hexeis* and *phronesis* are interwoven in EP. Good EP pertains to both character and intellectual virtues.	There is no clear reciprocity between MS and the other components of FCM.

The table shows that although there are certain differences between ES and EP, they are more closely allied in comparison with MS. Cuypers' description of the knowledge condition in empirical psychology also sheds light on the conceptual similarities between the two accounts of perception, for they both refer to:[176] i) an ethical sensibility based on the view that the self is a fundamentally ethical and evaluative structure with the ability to recognise moral salience in actions, characters, decisions, situations, and consequences; this ability ii) involves the appraisal (or evaluation) of actions, characters, decisions, situations, consequences in terms of one's emotions and evaluative scheme. In both the ES and FCVE models, these two functions are interwoven (reciprocity condition). For ease of exposition, I will discuss FCVE's

[176] These are i) knowledge of basic moral concepts, such as rules and obligations, and ii) the ability to think in moral terms, i.e. engage in moral appraisals (Cuypers, 2011:153).

developmental account of moral epistemology (i.e. EP) in terms of FCVE-ES, for FCVE takes the ES model as its empirical basis.

The FCVE-ES model raises a number of significant empirical and philosophical questions regarding its validity, structure, function and development. For example, critics may object that their conceptual similarity does not seem to deflect from the following question about FCVE: Would the FCVE model be taken as a valid normative *and* psychological working model or is it only a normative model? In particular, FCVE must show that it fulfills the following normative and empirical desiderata:

1. Moral Epistemology Desideratum –

   That FCVE should explain how ES enables moral knowledge.

This desideratum should indicate how a moral agent could acquire good ES. On the FCVE-ES model, moral knowledge is acquired through self-understanding and growth. The idea is that good ES requires the moral agent to understand her true motives, such that she can respond fittingly with regards to her emotions. This requires truthfulness and honesty about one's values (i.e. ones likes and dislikes), such that one can correct those which are not virtuous and encourage those which are. This process encourages that the moral agent submit her maladaptive emotions under the guidance of reason, which enables her to make better choices and judgement. This also correlates to the internal coherence condition of *eudaimonia*, where the *hexeis* and the intellect share in the view of the good, which in psychological terms could be translated as,the alignment of the reasoning part with the appetitive part.

2. Developmental Desideratum –

   Given that ES is crucial to acquiring moral knowledge, the developmental desideratum should give an account of how we develop and can improve ES.

Lacewing's ES model identifies distortions to ES can 'skew' a moral agent's epistemic landscape. Therefore, a developmental account of FCVE-ES should explain how moral agents

can correct for factors that distort the ES, which by doing so brings the ES in good condition and restores its proper functioning. I will be discussing the distortions in terms of defence mechanisms for they are both necessary and natural occurrences in everyone's developmental psychology, but also that they offer a clear example of how distortions to the ES can and do occur in empirical psychology, and the methods deployed to correct them. The third desideratum is that FCVE must have empirical status:

3. Empirical Desideratum –

   That FCVE-ES should ground its epistemological and developmental model of ES on the basis of empirical evidence from current psychological science.

Insofar as FCVE-ES model seeks to have practical force, the account has to be based on a scientific description. While appealing to meta-ethical notions might make a lot of philosophical sense, FCVE is a naturalistic realist theory, hence its normative claims about moral knowledge should be continuous with naturalistic methods of research[177] In addition, the psychological sciences can complement the conceptual understanding of the function of ES. With input from empirical evidence, one can better locate, for example, whether ES is a function of the emotion and / or intellect (this is a perennial metaethical problem). Furthermore, recent empirical findings on intuitions relating to System 1 (Kahneman, 2011) thinking have encouraged philosophers to rethink the robustness of theories that offer highly intellectualised notions of moral judgment.

[177] FCVE does not accept a principled distinction between facts and values because its first principle (*eudaimonia*) is both normative and naturalistic. In particular, all facts about the human soul and action are explained by the species-wide drive towards an ultimate *telos* (*eudaimonia*). Since ends entail values, and vice versa (viz. we pursue the things that we value), facts and values are entangled (Putnam, 1981). Our drive towards *eudaimonia* makes us value certain ways of living over others. *Eudaimonia* is a naturalistic concept because (a) it is a natural drive, (b) its achievement-conditions are based on exercising well essential features of our humanness, and (c) some ways of living realise these features better than others. Hence, inquiry in *eudaimonia* is continuous with empirical methods. Likewise, for FCVE, ethical claims are naturalistic because moral truth hinges on whether our ethical judgements discover natural facts about *eudaimonia*. In addition, FCVE's gloss of epistemic norms, like moral truth, is naturalistic because it takes truth to lie in the right *endoxa*, hence, in the world of experience.

However, before I go into the empirical and philosophical details of FCVE-ES model, I turn to discuss how philosophical models, such as the FCVE-ES, can engage with the empirical sciences in a constructive and helpful manner.

5.1.2 Psychologising Philosophy

The discussion about the limits of naturalistic approaches to moral psychology and education is usually couched in terms of Hume's Laws (Casebeer, 2003; Kristjánsson, 2011).[178] Hume's First Law (Hume, 1739:468) is linked with Moore's (1903) 'open-question argument' and pertains to a distinction between facts and values (Kristjánsson, 2011). The first law holds that evaluative terms or claims are not identical or reducible to naturalistic terms or claims. On an epistemological note, the idea is that evaluative claims cannot be *known* by virtue of their meaning (they are not analytic statements) or by naturalistic methods (they are not synthetic statements) – i.e. no amount of empirical evidence could ever justify evaluative claims. Hence, the statement 'ϕ-ing is abhorrent' falls foul of Hume's first law for 'ϕ-ing' is a descriptive term, like Jack's 'hitting' his dog. The abhorrence of 'ϕ-ing' cannot be validated as true by virtue of analysing the meaning of the terms. Moreover, there appears to be no observational evidence to substantiate the abhorrence of 'ϕ-ing'. Thus, the statement that 'ϕ-ing is abhorrent' could be the expression of someone's opinion which has no factual basis. The bearing of the open-question argument on our discussion is this: we cannot identify moral inquiry with scientific inquiry because it will always be an open question whether evaluative terms mean the same thing as naturalistic terms. In other words, we cannot 'naturalise' evaluative claims and study or justify them by appeal to empirical methods. Furthermore, this means that claims on the epistemic and educational desiderata about good ES cannot be studied empirically for they

[178] Kristjánsson (2011) very helpfully disentangles the two laws found in Hume's and Moore's (1903) writings. Although not so clearly, Casebeer (2003) discusses the difference, too. In my view, the first law is also epistemic, i.e. it is concerned with justification.

cannot be justified on the basis of empirical evidence. For example, if FCVE claims that good ES is a function of virtue or that it contributes to *eudaimonia,* then it must first naturalise these evaluative concepts in order to proceed with the study ES empirically; however, this is not possible for it would violate Hume's first law.

Regarding Hume's Second Law, Hume points out that 'Is' (i.e. statements of fact) do not logically entail 'ought' or 'ought not' (i.e. normative statements). Thus, the implication is that we cannot validly infer norms from facts about the case. Making this inference, without a further premise expressing a desire or norm, would violate Hume's second Law. The second law is concerned with the language and logic of the terms 'is' and 'ought' (Hume, 1739, 469); namely that we cannot validly infer an 'ought' from an 'is'). Moore's naturalistic fallacy argument is based on the second law: it is a fallacy to infer what is 'good' from natural properties, such as 'pleasant'; to put it in another way, evaluative terms (e.g. the 'good') are not reducible to naturalistic terms (e.g. the 'pleasant').

The implication of the second law is that the prescriptive and normative is logically autonomous from the fields that deals with natural facts. That is, science cannot prescribe what we ought to do based on observations of the kinds of beings we are. In effect, the second law suggests that psychologists cannot determine moral norms or epistemic norms, e.g. the scientist cannot adjudicate when ES is good. Similarly, psychologists cannot refute neither, FCVE's claim that ES is good if it discovers the mean, nor the Kantian claim that ES is good if it detects rational requirements. Nor can psychologists prescribe epistemic standards or values that ought to guide the development of ES, such as helping to decide whether one should cultivate justice reasoning (championed by Kohlbergian education theories) or character virtue (championed by FCVE)? In short, Hume's 'laws' imply that moral epistemology cannot be naturalised nor can science prescribe epistemic norms. Let us see some responses.

5.1.3 Responses

Here are some general guidelines I propose on how to naturalise moral epistemology and education. Responding to Hume's first law, I think that we should not accept the fact-value gap because this would mean that there is no way to bring about the study of ES, meaning that ethical perception would be a fictional ability. Additionally, if we accepted the fact-value gap, empirical evidence or considerations would not be valid factors to the moral psychology and education of ES. That is, facts about human nature and functioning would be regarded as completely irrelevant to our testing of educational desiderata or choosing of educational paradigms for ES (e.g. cognitive developmentalism or character education).

Furthermore, if we accept a fact-value gap, then the normative work of the philosophers (such as those of Aristotle's and Kant's, respectively) would no longer guide the scientific work in moral psychology and education. Typically, things in moral psychology work the other way around – an empirical paradigm's approach, for example, to character education is couched in a normative commitment, e.g. in a paradigm in moral epistemology. Hence, for example, a Kantian education of character will seek to educate character in line with its rationalist epistemology, "according to which character formation could be little more than the contingent shaping of feelings and behavior to rationally independent moral standards" (Carr, 2007:394). Succinctly put, the selection and direction of empirical paradigms in education depend on the normative articulations of the philosophers. Hence, scientific paradigm selection, as Carr (2007) explains, is more of a practical and value-laden enterprise rather than it is a theoretical matter. If we were to accept a fact-value gap, then we would have to conduct empirical work based on operationalised normative concepts in complete isolation from any form of conceptual analysis. This would be a non-starter since no definition of normative concepts could be value-free. Furthermore, the gap assumes that facts are value-free, whereas on Aristotle's notion of

teleology, and on the philosophies of pragmatist thinkers, such as Putnam, facts are related to ends such that they cannot be value-free: “the practices of scientific inquiry upon which we rely to decide what is and what is not a fact, presupposes values” (1981:128). To capture this point of view in a slogan, ‘value-free science is bad science, just as moral philosophy that ignores empirical evidence is bad moral philosophy’. In other words, scientific inquiry cannot be value-free and philosophical inquiry cannot ignore empirical evidence about human nature.

This brings us to the second law of Hume. Following Kristjánsson, I argue that we should not abandon both laws, for then psychology would become a “prescriptive enterprise” (2011:52). Following Carr (2007) and Kristjánsson (2011), I propose a moderate anti-reductionist approach to naturalising ethics based on accepting Hume’s second law. This means that, on the one hand, FCVE needs to abandon the first law in order to allow that facts about human nature to have a place in philosophical inquiry (for they are not distinct from values). On the other hand, FCVE needs to subscribe to the is-ought gap of the second law in order to undercut reductionist moves which threaten to make science a prescriptive enterprise. As explained earlier, this could hardly be feasible since, scientists cannot operationalise normative and evaluative terms without assuming values. In addition, reductionism would overlook that ethical concepts have a unique function – they enable us to express distinct states of mind, linked to ideals and imagination (‘OLeary-Hawthorne & Price, 1996). Moral judgements and language issue from distinct psychological states which serve their own distinct function from other states of mind. Thus, I suggest that it would be a categorical mistake to entirely reduce moral concepts (ideals) into naturalistic concepts. Also defending such a view, Carr shows that science cannot not fix the meaning of moral (e.g. prescriptive) terms on purely empirical grounds:

> There is thus far nothing in such 'ethical naturalism' to support the idea that the moral meaning and status of courage depends upon natural or social scientific knowledge of human responses to pain or suffering (that, for example, since present-day citizens are not very good at resisting pain, courage should no longer be regarded as a virtue). More simply and seriously, of course, what we regard as a matter for moral empirical investigation must obviously depend upon what we count (conceptually or normatively or both) as morally significant rather than vice versa. (2007:398)

As Hume's is-ought distinction suggests, then, there is no conceptual entailment from research on fear that could bear on how we ought to define courage. On that score, the ethical naturalist cannot claim that psychological science could fix the moral meaning of prescriptive terms, e.g. virtue-terms. The challenge then presents as, 'How could we bring empirical work into moral epistemology and education?'

5.1.4 The Proper Use of Science in Moral Education

I suggest that psychological science could do the following work in moral psychology. First, it could constrain which traits and norms we ought to develop on the basis of their feasibility. On the subject concerning the selection of feasible traits and norms, I subscribe to Flanagan's principle of minimal psychological realism, which states that: when we are constructing a moral theory or proposing a moral ideal we should make sure "that the character, decision processing, and behavior prescribed are possible, or are perceived to be possible, for creatures like us" (Flanagan, 1991:32). In a somewhat similar vein, McDowell points out that "the innate endowment of human beings must put limits on the shapings of second nature that are possible for them" (1998:191).

However, we should also be mindful of the extent to which we use facts about our first nature as guidance in the selection of our second nature traits and norms. This bears on the issue of whether it is Science or Philosophy that determines who we should become through moral education. Carr rightly shows (I believe) that Flanagan's principle makes sense to the extent that it constrains, for example, the proscription against infidelity on the basis of what is psychologically feasible by creatures like us, as opposed to Martians (2007:398). However, the principle could not seriously constrain the proscription against infidelity on account of, say, some alleged inclination of the human species to promiscuity (Carr, 2007:398). Therefore, evidence from psychology about human motivation has a claim to which ideals and norms it would be rational for us to accept on the basis of feasibility; for a normative theory that promotes an unfeasible or utopian ideal about society is unreasonable. On the other hand, the is-ought gap constrains the quick inference from facts about who we are as a species, to who we should be, morally speaking.

Second, if we constrain the first law of Hume, then *eudaimonia* becomes continuous with scientific research because our various ends ('oughts') derive from our ultimate end of *eudaimonia* and from essential features of humanness, like sociality (facts). Hence, even if facts about human nature do not prescribe exact and universal norms about what the best way to live are, they at least put constraints on what counts as the best way to live and which ways of life are realisable (feasible). This renders *eudaimonia* a partially empirical matter, i.e. a matter of scientific research (Lacewing, 2019). In this way, FCVE can defend a psychologically informed answer to these value-laden questions, as far as it abandons the first law but retains the second law.

In summary, science cannot dictate how we should live but it can put limits on the forms of life that do not serve our needs as a species or threaten to alienate us from our commitments.

Whether it is ethics or psychology, it is important that neither reduces and alienates the moral agent from her "deepest values, cares and life-projects" (Chappell and Smyth 2018).

5.1.4 Anti-reductionist and Integrative Approaches to ES

I close this section by exploring which naturalistic approach to ES is proper to adopt, taking into consideration the anti-reductionist proviso above. Since ES appeals to further accounts of personality traits as part of its evaluative scheme, the most suitable empirical approach to ES is integrative, which conforms with current scientific findings that shows that moral functioning is based on cognitive, affective, and dispositional components (Narvaez & Rest, 1995):

> there is no reason in principle why a conception of morality and moral education might not be developed that gives appropriate recognition to the cognitive, affective, and dispositional aspects of moral experience. Indeed, as already noted, once we get past the relatively modern psychological emphases on cognition or affect or character as in some sense mutually exclusive and look more closely at the ethics of such moral philosophers and theorists as Aristotle and Kant, we see that they had a great deal to say about the interplay of rational deliberation and judgment, and of feeling and character in moral life and association. (Carr, 2007:396)

Since ES is a function of psychological structures, then it makes sense to study it from an empirical standpoint in order to illuminate what underpins its good function. But, as I explained above, psychologists cannot describe good ES independently of standards of moral knowledge (Cuypers, 2011). The latter belongs to the domain of philosophy.

I suggest, though, that a productive way to naturalise the values guiding our understanding of good ES is to examine how we could deal with the cognitive distortions that effect the moral

perception function of ES. As I will show, this work generates a value: good ES requires self-understanding and truthfulness. In particular, if we follow research in the unconscious, we are led to value truthfulness to oneself. Contemporary socio-cognitive psychology research has come to recognise a host of unconscious factors, such as inaccurate intuitions, false identities, and situational variables, that distort our self-understanding (e.g. emotions, motives) and subsequently affect our appraisals of social situations (Lacewing, 2015b).

On a more psychodynamic note, Lacewing (2015a; 2019) explores the distorting function of defence mechanisms in ES; psychodynamic defences unconsciously distort our understanding of our emotional states – e.g. what we feel and why we feel it – hence, they distort our understanding of the situations and the reasons that explain our actions (e.g. false altruism). A distorted understanding of ourselves and social situations hampers the proper functioning of ES, which results in (a) the failure to notice moral salience in situations, and (b) misreading emotions, motive, and consequences.

Non-psychodynamic approaches, too, confirm the often-distorting function of unconscious processes which generates phenomena like motivated reasoning, confirmation biases, and post-hoc reasoning (Lacewing, 2015b). Since ES (however imperfectly) informs us about the demands of the good life, including demands in our interactions with others, truthfulness is a pre-condition of good ES because self-deceit blinds us to these demands.

In summary, what is encouraging is that there seems to be ways in which both science and philosophy can helpfully contribute to understanding. On the FCVE-ES model, empirical evidence helps philosophers and educationists determine epistemic and ethical values about ES and the self. In particular scientific research in the unconscious generates a core epistemic and ethical ideal about ES – viz. truthfulness. This core ideal, in turn, entails constraints on certain values about the good life: “the demands of truthfulness condemn certain ethical values and

practices, and place constraints on which forms of ethical life are best" (Lacewing, 2019:192–93). However, once again, we should guard against reducing ethics or psychology into one another. Let us now discuss which models of moral epistemology are in line with our developmental and empirical desiderata and ES is preferable over current perceptual models.

5.2 Perceptual Models of ES

a. Intuitionist Models

In this section I discuss the various perceptual models of moral epistemology. For ease of exposition, I will use the term ES to name them because these models pick out the same functions – noticing, interpreting, appraising moral cues – albeit they misdescribe the mechanism. Most perceptual models of ES – psychological and metaethical models – endorse the idea that social and moral appraisals have an emotive basis. These are emotion-based perceptual models. In particular, they tend to claim that emotions are perceptions of value. There is disagreement among them whether the perceptive function of emotions is based on a cognitive component or is just a bodily function (Lacewing, 2015a:336). For example, do we perceive danger via the beliefs that constitute fear or via bodily feelings? The strength of the perceptual model of ES is that it is now recognised that social and moral appraisals or judgements have emotive basis (e.g. Damasio, 1994). Also, emotions are no longer considered a source of bias and error (Lacewing, 2015b). On the contrary, research now confirms that "reasoning without emotion" is defective (Narvaez et. al., 2010:82).

The problem with emotion-based perceptual models of ES is in their moral epistemology. On their model, a moral judgement is correct if perception is veridical (Lacewing, 2015a:342). For McDowell (1979; 1985) this is a problem. It is difficult to show that we perceive moral value through emotions – viz. *merited* responses – in the way we perceive facts; we do not literally perceive features of a situation as meriting a response. For McDowell, this idea "turn[s] the

epistemology of value into mere mystification" (McDowell 1998:132). In effect, he suggests that we avoid the idea of an emotion-based perceptual modality. Instead, he posits that ES is a sort of intellectual sensitivity to moral reasons – i.e. rational connections between aspects of the world or between situations and merited responses (1979; 1985). In other words, McDowell claims that we become aware that a situation merits our response through our intellect and reasoning. McDowell's account of ES is rationalist because he holds that ES is a function of the conscious, thinking system. Hence, his account divorces ES from the evaluative work of emotional dispositions. However, this move leaves unexplained, how the intellect effects socio-moral appraisals without the emotions. Current psychological science largely disconfirms a rationalist view of ES, such as McDowell's. It is now recognised that ES is largely a function of the unconscious system based on implicit processes, such as emotions and intuitions.

Current intuitionist models of ES take on board these findings and hold that ES is a function of moral intuitions, i.e. automatic, non-conscious judgements about events, persons, and actions (Lacewing, 2015b). Intuitionist models do not posit some form of perceptual modality although they assign to intuitions a perceptual role. Instead of 'applying rules', moral intuitions enable us to notice moral salience and to make quick moral judgements. Rationalist models of moral intuitions claim that intuitions are heuristics or structured by a universal moral grammar (Lacewing, 2015b). A non-rationalist alternative is Jonathan Heidt's Social Intuitionism Model (SIM) who squares moral intuitions in terms of feelings, hence, contrasts them to thinking and inferential processes. Haidt is influenced by Antonio Damasio's somatic-marker hypothesis about emotions and cites evidence from social, cultural, evolutionary psychology, and primatology which suggests that intuitions are evolutionary adaptations of innate structures which have been shaped by experience and culture over time.[179] As a result of these adaptations,

[179] Antonio Damasio (1994) put forth the Somatic-Marker Hypothesis which holds that emotions guide our decisions and behavior by informing us about rewards or punishments. Repeated association of outcomes

the automatic processing of social information is a function of emotion-based intuitions. Haidt's SIM is non-rationalist because he assigns a central role to emotions in the moral epistemology of ES, whereas reason has the role of an 'advocate'. According to Haidt, conscious thinking performs post-hoc reasoning that rationalises our intuitive socio-moral appraisals; as he puts it, reason is more like a lawyer rather than a judge "searching for the truth" (Haidt, 2001:814). That is, we use conscious reasoning in order to justify our judgements and to persuade others. However, I maintain that intuitions should not be understood as non-cognitive since they are informed by cognitive processing of social meaning (viz. is something a constructive criticism or an insult?), consequences (viz. is this going to hurt sensitive Eric?) and motives (viz. is this act based on kindness?). It is the contribution of cognition in emotion-based intuitive ES, that links intuitions with moral knowledge.

However, SIM does neither assess judgements in terms of truth, nor does it justify them in terms of the veridicality of intuitions. Instead, ES suggests that we assess judgements by reference to whether intuitions enable an "accurate understanding of the situation to which they are responses" (Lacewing, 2015b:427). If the intuitions create *appropriate* emotional responses, then it follows that they have sensitised us to moral salience correctly, for they have provided an accurate reading of the situation. Good ES is a function of intuitions that are finely attuned with moral salience in different situations. The judgements based on accurate intuitions are supposed to be correct because they provide an accurate reading and understanding of moral cues.

(rewards/ punishments) with bodily feeling (feel-good/bad) and positive/negative emotion generates 'go' or 'stop' cues/signals. Our judgements are largely guided by these emotion-somatic-markers (cues).

b. The Skill Model of ES

The skill model of perceptual ES improves on the perceptual model's epistemology and offers an empirically cogent developmental model of ES (Annas, 2011; Jacobson, 2005; Haidt, 2001; Narvaez, 2004). Unlike the other perceptual models, the skill model does not posit a perceptual modality for ES. Instead, it holds that ES is perceptual *skill*. Expertise in perceptual ES is like expertise in chess. The chess master perceives 'what to do next' without perceiving or detecting a property; rather she perceives 'what to do next' as a matter of expertise or skill. Likewise, the virtuous person is a moral 'expert' who discerns evaluative differences in situations due to her virtuous emotional dispositions, e.g. her kindness enables her to distinguish friendly teasing from malignant teasing. So, the development of perceptual ES is a matter of developing her dispositions, like kindness (Lacewing, 2015a:340).

Lacewing points out that we can model the development of the dispositions involved in the skill-model on the basis of the socio-cognitive theory of personality. Socio-cognitive theorists understand personality traits in terms of 'socio-cognitive units' (Mischel and Shoda, 1995; Cognitive-Affective Processing System or CAPS). These units – viz. our traits – enable us to make socio-moral appraisals because they are knowledge structures or 'schemas' made of "beliefs, desires, emotions, goals, expectations, values, and plans" (Lacewing, 2015a:340). The 'schemas' are script-like structures that "channel and filter social perceptions and memories…. and guide our appraisal of social situations, our memory for events, and our affective reactions" (Lapsley & Narvaez 2004:195). The activation of one element of the schema generates the activation of others. For example, "compassion involves being moved to sadness (emotion) by the misfortune of others (belief or experience), being motivated to help (desire), and evaluating

such help positively (value)" (Lacewing, 2015a:340).[180] In other words, the "schemas explain the well-established connection between character and the interpretation of social situations" (2015a:341).

For psychologists, the link between personality and skill in ES lies in the acquisition of a large network of knowledge structures (moral 'schemas') from lived moral experiences. The more frequent and consistent the use of a schema, the more 'chronically active' the schema becomes, such that it becomes a trait. Hence, the link between traits and expertise is that the repeated activation of a schema makes one an 'expert' in that area. Thus, since ES is based on schemas, the repeated activation of a virtue-schema makes one an expert in ES (Lacewing, 2015b:421).

The upshot of the perceptual skill model is that it gives rise to the following developmental idea: good ES is a matter of perceptual skill embodied in virtuous dispositions (viz. traits). Thus, the development of good ES is a matter of developing skill in perception through the development of the virtuous self's dispositions.

c. Lacewing's Critique of Perceptual Models

Lacewing (2015a) does not object to the idea of ES as perceptual *skill*. He thinks that it maps well on current psychology of personality and expert learning. However, he objects to the understanding of perceptual skill as being independent of the self (personality) which is fundamentally ethical and evaluative. He argues that the skill model is right as long as it recognises that perceptual skill is *possessed* by the self and thus does not constitute the self (Lacewing, 2015a:341).

[180] Also, Lapsley & Narvaez describe schemas as knowledge structures that "direct our attention selectively to certain features of our experience at the expense of others" (2006:268). In addition, schemas determine our choices of life tasks and our behavioral routines, that is, schemas are also behavioral sequences.

The perceptual skill model of ES has a cogent developmental basis because it resonates with current developments in the psychology of learning and expertise (Lacewing, 2015a). However, the epistemological difficulty of the skill-model is that a claim to perceptual expertise cannot establish that a judgement is veridical; the truth of a judgement needs to be established independently of the truth of the claim to expertise (Lacewing, 2015a:345). That is, whether someone is an expert, or not, is a matter of whether the judgments one makes are true or not. But we cannot appeal to expertise in order to establish whether a judgement is true, for this would be like putting the cart before the horse. We need to first establish whether the judgements of that person are true, following which we can then say whether that person is an expert.

On Lacewing' model, the self is fundamentally evaluative or ethical because our emotions are evaluative, in the sense that how we respond to situations entail or reveal certain beliefs we already hold, i.e. our values.[181] In this way, ES largely *reflects* our beliefs as opposed to *informing* our beliefs (i.e. we do not see things *as they are*; we see them in light of our values).[182] Therefore Lacewing is doubtful that a model based on perceptual expertise can lead to moral knowledge for this model does not take into account the evaluative attitudes that effect ethical perception.

[181] Mulligan's work offers an in-depth exploration between philosophy of emotions, psychology of emotions and the philosophy of values: "the philosophy and psychology of emotions pays little attention to the philosophy of value and the latter pays only a little more attention to the former. This is surprising. For according to many philosophies and psychologies of the emotions appraisals, evaluations, assessments, valuing, and impressions of value and importance are essential to our emotional lives. And according to many philosophies value is to be understood in terms of emotions. Three families of questions which can only be answered by combining accounts of emotions and of value may be distinguished" (2009:476)

[182] On Lacewing's account, our (moral) perception is largely involuntary, for he holds that there are unconscious emotions that can 'skew' our interpretation of situations and events, such as those triggered by our defense mechanisms, which is a developmental by-product. This view is supported by theories in automatic unconscious cognitive processes. Thus, 'the way we want to' could entail they way our unconscious processes influence us to, or the way we choose to.

In the discussion below on FCVE-ES, I show that here is much overlap between ES and the *hexeis*. First, the Aristotelian self is an ethical or evaluative self because it is constituted by the *hexeis* which are themselves ethical dispositions. This supports that ethical perception is evaluative by establishing that it is a function of the *hexeis*. The developmental implication of this overlap is that by improving the emotional responses and evaluations, we can bring ES and thus the *hexeis* into good condition; In this way, we develop appropriate moral responses and a better understanding of the good. In response to shortcomings of perceptual models of ES, in the next section I sketch the theoretical and empirical model of FCVE.

5.3 FCVE's Non-perceptual Model of ES

My thesis about FCVE's model of ES is that *good* ES is a function of character and intellectual virtue and a key competence for the good life. Since good ES involves the deconstruction of our defences, which leads to increased self-understanding and the attunement of affective states with reason, the leading idea of my proposal is that the FCVE-ES model offers a guide to how one could attain a flourishing life through truthfulness and self-understanding. I argue that the FCVE-ES model offers a number of epistemological advantages and a clear empirical developmental model. Let me present, first, FCVE's theoretical model of ES. Second, I explain Lacewing's model of ES which informs FCVE. Third, I present FCVE's model of ES (FCVE-ES) and then explain how it meets the three desiderata of epistemological, developmental and empirical.

5.3.1 The Theoretical Model of ES

My guide to Lacewing's and FCVE's model of ES incorporates Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, the psychodynamic model of the mind, and Williams' work on authenticity and truthfulness.[183] I have shown earlier that being truthful to oneself is a powerful gloss on *eudaimonia*. For Aristotle, the true self lies in the *hexeis* because these dispose us favorably or unfavorably to the things that we genuinely take pleasure in (or value) unconsciously and automatically. As we saw, 'firm disposition' means that "it is second nature to the virtuous person to love and find his greatest enjoyment in the things he knows to be good" (Burnyeat, 1980:87–8). In addition, the true self is expressed in choice; our choices reveal our character (*NE* 1115b5–6; III.1).[184] Given that choices align our character's desires with our rational desires, it seems that we wholeheartedly embrace – or identify with – our self through choice; the true self lies in our second-order desires about our character's desires (Frankfurt, 1971).[185] In this way, we may we may define the Aristotelian true self as the self that stems from the harmony between one's character and one's second-order desires (viz. one's evaluative scheme) about one's character's desires. The interesting result of this analysis is that of the resulting harmony, which forms part of the definition of *eudaimonia* – i.e. when the agent secures internal harmony pertaining to the soul, she also performs the right actions – can be mapped onto the idea of cognitive consonance and the resolution of psychodynamic conflict in psychology (Lacewing, 2015a; 2019).

[183] I borrow from Williams idea of authenticity and truthfulness (2002) to convey the sense of internal coherence in Aristotelian *eudaimonia* – for being authentic and truthful to oneself (while respecting the role of rationality) allows the two parts of the soul to cohere, which is a condition for *eudaimonia*.

[184] Aristotle considers choice and knowledge as necessary conditions of responsibility because he most probably assumes that they reveal 'true' selves, i.e. apt for praise / blame.

[185] By extension from an account of moral responsibility, an identificationist account of the self would hold that the true self is the self one identifies with (or embraces) by desiring its traits rationally, i.e. one endorses oneself via her second-order desire. A person's true self is revealed in choice or rational desire.

Although it is observed that vicious people may also seemingly be able to achieve harmony in the parts of their souls, because they do not suffer from conflict the way the akratic agents do, in terms of their desires (the appetitive part) and their beliefs (rational part). Thus, if *eudaimonia* is understood as harmony between the two parts of the soul, then this raises the worry that vicious people could also claim to be eudaimon despite having the wrong conception of good. Aristotle refutes this by explaining that vicious people live miserably on account of having the wrong conception of the good: "in bad people too there is something by nature good, which is greater than what they are in themselves [i.e. qua bad], and which aims at the proper good" (*NE* 1173a4–5). On this understanding, the mental conflict of the vicious agent would consist in wishing for the true good as guided by the natural impulse of wish (*boulesis*), but would be viciously motivated to pursue the merely apparent good (Grönroos, 2015).

The link between Aristotelian harmony and *eudaimonia*, when translated into the framework of (psychodynamic) psychology, therefore, can be understood as holding that truthfulness and authenticity are required to achieve true cognitive consonance and wellbeing. Whereas defence mechanisms, self-deception, false identities, biased and self-serving thinking may make one feel that there is consonance, the consonance would be merely apparent and not true. How then could we know when consonance is true? Aristotle's answer is that harmony between the parts of the soul enables the agent to distinguish real from apparent goods under guidance of wish (*boulesis*); Lacewing's answers rests on the idea of attaining cognitive consonance through the ridding of epistemological distortions such as defence mechanisms, and thereby ensuring that one's ES is 'educated' as opposed to 'naïve' (2015b:416). On both theories, the absence of a set of universal rules that applies to ethical matters means that people have to rely on making choices to the best of what they believe to be true. Assuming one's beliefs are adequately informed, it is more likely that one's aim for *eudaimonia* or a good life is made more accurate if one were virtuous as opposed to wretched. Being virtuous is based on good ethical perception,

which on Lacewing's theory is conceptualised in terms of 'educated' ES, whereas for Aristotle it concerns habituating the *hexeis* such that they are in good condition.

However, Aristotle offers the more powerful argument about true consonance and *eudaimonia*: he argues that when the *hexeis* have been cultivated properly, the faculty of *boulesis* (wish) directs us to the true goods because *boulesis* aims at the true good by default or by natural harmony (*NE* III.4):

> there is a natural harmony between our faculty of wish and objects of wish, not unlike the natural harmony he [Aristotle] thinks holds between our sense organs and objects of those senses (Pakaluk, 2005:142)

Hence, for Aristotle, the notion of Lacewing's 'educated intuitions' would not ungrounded; there are true goods (objects of wish) and the way to recognise them is *via* the harmony between reason and the *hexeis*. The consonance between reason and *hexeis* is true – when we are true to ourselves – insofar as the *hexeis* are in good condition, which is the result of proper habituation.

Since one of the conditions of being virtuous is the ability to distinguish the true good from the guise of the good when these two diverge, by being honest and truthful about one's motives, one improves one's ethical evaluation on ESM. Given that our ES is based on emotional dispositions, our ES would be amiss if our emotional dispositions are uneducated (i.e. naïve) or untrue. The good function of ES is based on the notions of self-understanding and self-development, which in the simplest layman terms would be maturation and growth. Having sketched the theoretical model of good ES – its relationship with *eudaimonia* and authenticity – I turn now to show how Lacewing's model informs FCVE's model and then consider whether FCVE meets the three desiderata.

5.3.2 Lacewing's Model of ES

Lacewing develops his account of ES on the theory of the self as composed by 'social-cognitive units' of personality (CAPS model). He argues that ES is a function of the self's structures; ES is not a mere skill that is "possessed by the self", he notes (2015a:342). Instead of an epistemology based on the truth of perceptual judgements, or the fittingness of intuitions, or the expertise of skills, Lacewing's account of moral epistemology takes the right question to be whether dispositions and emotions are 'fitting' or 'appropriate'.

He suggests that "an account of the fittingness of an emotion requires an account of the nature and structure of the self that is disposed to have fitting emotions. What would be the structure of a self that is unmoved to sadness except by the prospect of losing its own virtue?" (2015a:243). Such an epistemology should seek to justify moral judgements by assessing the structures of the self (dispositions) via the fittingness of its emotions involved in ES. His epistemology of ES links well with the virtue-framework: 'fittingness' is a matter of whether the person's emotions respond well to the situation – e.g. anger 'fits' with a situation if the insult is true (Lacewing, 2015a:342). That is, the virtuous person (the expert) has fitting emotions because her virtues make her respond well. In particular, he suggests that the question whether an emotion is fitting is always related to the question of their defensiveness. As we saw, our moral deliberations and judgements are strongly affected by defensive thinking and unfitting emotions (2015a:344–45). For example, when an agent is nervous (and therefore defensive), a benign casual glace from a stranger is likely to be interpreted as something hostile.

Lacewing's epistemic and developmental approach to ES is in line with the virtue-framework: "seeking to establish the fittingness of emotions is an exercise in self-understanding, both in the sense of understanding more about the virtuous self and in the sense of understanding more about oneself. One element of self-understanding and its development, then, concerns

uncovering and deconstructing one's defences" (2015a:345–46). A welcome implication of the virtue framework is that "fittingness of emotion and the expertise of the virtuous self are not independent"; they mesh "through the coherence of each with the other" (Lacewing, 2015a:343). In short, for Lacewing, the perceptual models fail to offer justification to moral judgements because they seek to show that good emotion-based judgements involve veridical experiences and perceptions of value. Hence, emotions are supposed to be value-free perceptual modalities whose perceptions must be tested for their truth and veridicality, not for their fittingness of response. This explains why in perceptual models, moral error is perceptual error, not evaluative error.

Lacewing's ES has significant epistemic and practical implications, for by making the connection to the self, it changes the perspective of discourse on moral learning and development from something external to the self. On this approach the question is not so much why people do not deliberate well, but rather why can't people deliberate well even if they wanted to. The assumption to this approach is that we expect all functioning adults to have a sense or grasp of the moral *endoxa* of society; they know the rule of thumb as to what right or wrong moral conduct is.

However, why is it that despite such knowledge, many of us fail to be good? Is it an intellectual or perceptual error, as a Socratic approach would have it? Or is it an affective error? The answer for Lacewing's ES model lies in the self, which points to the assimilation of 'external' knowledge to 'internal' values. To value something is to have affective attachment to it (in the way that our *hexeis* are disposed to like or dislike it). However emotional distortions to our perceptive sensitivity can affect whether we stand in good or bad condition in terms of our attachment to the object. This brings to attention the importance of correcting emotional distortions. The correction of distortions allows the agent to deliberate well, and if the agent is

able to deliberate well, then she improves in her moral judgement, and acquires moral knowledge.

This is why for Lacewing, the acquisition of moral knowledge is based neither on deliberation alone nor on our emotions alone; rather it is based on skill of correcting for emotional distortions that leads to better moral reasoning, which he calls the development of expert moral skill. In what follows below I discuss FCVE's developmental model of ES.

5.3.3 The Aristotelian Model of ES

a. Model of Moral Learning and Development

For the discussion of moral learning, I avoid more content-loaded terms like 'moral education' or 'character education' and conduct the discussion in terms of 'moral learning' and 'development'. The distinction in use of 'development' rather than 'education' lies in the following three reasons. First is the sense that education invites content-based connotations, which implies an 'outside-in' approach to learning, where what one learns intellectually may inform the self but such 'knowledge' may not be assimilated in the self. By way of contrast, the term 'development' conveys exploration and growth from within, i.e. 'inside-out'. Second, the notion of education is liable to give a false sense of 'point of completion', whereas development denotes something that takes places over the course of a lifetime. If moral learning were approached from the point of view of education (rather than development), this may suggest that having learned the content of a 'moral syllabus', a 17-year-old moral agent would be just as morally wise as a 70-year-old moral agent, which is highly unlikely to be the case. Lastly, one aspect of moral development, which is not explicitly captured by the concept of education is the assimilation of an agent's moral understanding to her notion of 'self'. While in moral philosophy, the agent is often identified in terms of her disposition and character, as

well as the lesser used word of agency, these terms nevertheless fail to capture the notion of the psychological self, which is the seat that holds all these concepts together.

My choice in the use of 'self' in the ensuing discussions serves to emphasise that the agent's characters and dispositions can be better understood as functions of 'socio-cognitive units' that form part of her psychological self, through which she comes to understand and form beliefs of the world around her and her relation to it. In this sense, learning the 'that' non-experientially and affectively would barely lead to moral learning or development. For moral learning and development to take place, both the 'that' and the 'because' have to be further assimilated into the moral agent's notion of self, such that virtues (justice, kindness, honesty, etc.) become a part of oneself or identity. It is this way that choices that issue from the agent, understood as embodying or expressing the virtues, constitute *eudaimonia*. This understanding of learning brings out the relation between morality and *eudaimonia* on the one hand, and moral development and personal growth on the other.

b. The Developmental Desideratum

The main developmental aim of FCVE's model of ES (FCVE-ES) is the development of good *hexeis* and *phronesis*. Since the *hexeis* constitute the Aristotelian self, I suggest that the key to the development of ES is the development of the self as a whole.

In FCVE the development of good ES is a product of habituation which is, in broad brush, a process of character-formation or self-formation: habituation not only makes the passions amenable to reason, but also integrates the *hexeis* with a value system –initially one internalises the values of educators. Since the *hexeis* are defined as the dispositions that result from habituation, this process generates the Aristotelian self. Habituation should not be understood as a mechanical process:

> To say that we become just by doing just actions is to abbreviate a whole series of steps…[A]ction presupposes the discrimination of a situation as requiring a response, reactive emotions that mark that response, and desires and beliefs about how and for the sake of what ends one should act. We misconstrue Aristotle's notion of action producing character if we isolate the exterior moment of action from the interior cognitive and affective moments which characterize even the beginner's ethical behaviour. (Sherman, 1989:178)

If habituation were a mechanical process, it would generate mindless, knee-jerk habits of unreflective rule-following. In particular, habituation must be a critical process of developing one's power of discernment (i.e. ES), which a cognitive excercise; a moral agent learns to identify kind acts by learning when it is appropriate to feel kindness.[186] That is why habituation should not over-specify traits.

But how is affective commitment to virtue accomplished? Sherman does not explain this part well but rather over-intellectualises the affective commitment to virtue. On the other hand, as Burnyeat (1980) explains, the moral beginner learns to identify 'the that' by experiencing it via reward, not critically.[187] In the process, the learner derives pleasure, which motivates further

[186] The work of the educator is to sensitise the child to features of situations through training the child's emotions. At the same time, the child comes to desire 'the that' – virtuous judgements and values – by internalizing it via imitative learning, admonitions and rules, conditioning, identification with role models (1999:39). These activities generate pleasure, says Sherman (1999:39). Imitation and learning, says Aristotle, is among the greatest pleasures (*Poet*. 1448b4–17). The child learns 'the that' as a performer. Sherman points out the role of "mimetic enactment of poetry, lyre-playing, song and dance" in habituation (1989:181–82). The child learns "'from within' what the emotions and actions of such characters are like" (181–82). In addition, action repetition by imitation of role models is a critical process because one tries to "approximate some ideal action type that has been set as one's goal. Learning through repetition will be then a matter of successive trials that vary from one another as they approach this ideal way of acting" (1989:178–9).

[187] The learner is guided to do acts that one is told they are just in a way that one comes to judge oneself that they are just. In this way one has taken the judgement to heart; one has made the judgement one's own judgement (1980:74). When the lovers of virtue fail to do the noble thing – e.g. because their passions led them astray – they feel shame. For Burnyeat, shame plays an important role in moral improvement (1980:78–9). Feeling shame is a

repetition of the acts. Hence, for Burnyeat, habituation is a process of assimilation of 'the that' by *doing*. This generates affective, unconscious commitment (viz. the love) of virtue, viz. the desire to perform virtuous acts (love of virtue);[188] second, the learner acquires the ability to identify virtuous acts ('the that') by performing them. Hence, the development of the character (or the *hexeis*) incorporates experiential knowledge of the 'that' and affective commitment to it (i.e. virtue).

For Burnyeat, habituation is a "less than fully rational process" (1980:80); it is basically the development of automatic, *unreasoned* evaluative responses which nonetheless have intentional content and can be revised later via reflection.[189] The moral learner gradually chooses her good acts for the sake of the good and the fine because she takes pleasure in her acts, viz. she has developed a stable *hexis*: "The further condition is that all this must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. That is, it is second nature to the virtuous person to love and find her greatest enjoyment in the things he knows to be good" (1980:87–8).

Affective commitment to virtue is extremely important for the good function of ES. Non-moral unconscious urges often compete with moral desires and goals, disguising themselves with defensive thinking, biases, or motivated cognition, etc. These unconscious mechanisms often overpower ES taking our moral attention away from moral goals. On the other hand, a firm virtuous *hexis* is an affective, unconscious drive that directs our attention and cognition to

sign that one is not stuck with the Many who only obey to their fear of punishment (*NE* 1179b11–15). Shame is the semi-virtue of the youth (*NE* 1120b10–21). It is the emotion that helps the youth to improve morally because it acts as negative reinforcer shame makes the youth "receptive to the kind of moral education which will set his judgement straight and develop the intellectual capacities (practical wisdom) which will enable him to avoid such errors" (Burnyeat, 1980:78–79).

[188] Aristotle claims that pleasure is a sign of virtue (*NE* 1099a13–15); also, lovers of the noble take pleasure in naturally pleasant things (*NE* 1104b3–13).

[189] By 'unreasoned' Burnyeat means that the source of our responses and commitment with the noble is non-rational desire and pleasure, not reasoned desires formed under the heading of a conception of the good (1980:80). However, desire and emotion are intentional states with a thought component; e.g. shame is about dishonor, notes Burnyeat. Hence, teachers infuse these passions with certain beliefs that are in principle revisable later.

moral goals unconsciously and effortlessly. Burnyeat's reading shows that the affective core of the *hexeis* is unconscious and this explains why defective *hexeis* distort and overpower the conscious mind. Having understood how FCVE-ES develops with the *hexeis*, we need to see how ES leads to moral knowledge, i.e. what states of mind moral knowledge involves, according to FCVE-ES.

Lastly, FCVE's developmental model is fundamentally oriented to self-development and self-improvement. Aristotle's theory of responsibility for character lends itself to such an understanding. In particular, he rejects the idea that bad character excuses one from moral responsibility. This excuse has the following form: it is not open to agents with a settled character to see things differently or to change their character (*NE* III.5). For example, wrongdoers may claim that that is who they are, or that they had an bad upbringing. Aristotle denies this:

> Still they are themselves by their slack lives responsible for becoming men of that kind, and men make themselves responsible for being unjust or self-indulgent, in the one case by cheating and in the other by spending their time in drinking bouts and the like; for it is activities exercised on particular objects that make the corresponding character (*NE* 1114a5–9).

In this passage Aristotle possibly refers to young adults whose characters are still under development. But how could agents know that repeated wrongdoing creates bad *hexeis* that are difficult to revise later? Although he does not state it clearly, he seems to assume also since we all know the norms from early age – we are all taught the basic *endoxa* – we are also morally responsible for wrongdoing from early on. Therefore, our character formation is a process which is 'up to the self', i.e. we are co-creators of our character. He is so sure about that

principle that he does not spend more time to defend it: ignoring that principle of self-formation is a sign of a thoroughly senseless person; such ignorance is either non-sensical or culpable.

One may object that someone becomes a slacker because habituation in the early stages is non-rational process, as Burnyeat (1980) claims. Hence, the slacker came to like the wrong kind of pleasures and is blind to her bad condition. If habituation is a non-rational process, then it seems reasonable that one can be excused for as young children, one is unable to critically choose how to develop one's *hexeis*. By the time one becomes an adult, it seems like it is too late to revise the *hexeis*. However, the solution to this problem lends itself to the idea of self-improvement.

Burnyeat admits that habituation is a "less than fully rational process" (1980:80); it is basically the development of *unreasoned* evaluative responses. This is important in developing unconscious and effortless commitment to virtue and the fine. By 'unreasoned' Burnyeat means that the source of our responses and commitment with virtue is non-rational desire and pleasure, not reasoned desires formed in the light of a conception of the good (1980:80). However, desire and emotion are intentional states with a thought component; e.g. it is *about* something. Hence, educators 'infuse' the passions with certain beliefs that are in principle revisable later. This reading highlights his view that, in principle, we can later modify our affective, unconscious core (e.g. our emotional dispositions) acquired by habituation by dismantling them via their belief component. In this way, it opens space for self-improvement through increased self-understanding and cognitive restructuring: by changing the belief component we modify the maladaptive emotional responses.

c. The Epistemological Desideratum

The very value of ES in moral epistemology is that it substitutes rules on social perception for evaluative sensibility. In order to meet the epistemological desideratum, FCVE could adopt Lacewing's proposal. On that score, FCVE should abandon the perceptual model of ES and turn to an understanding of ES in terms of the self's structures – viz. the self described by empirical psychology. In the case of Aristotle, the self is a moral character constituted by the *hexeis*. In psychology, the moral character is a personality structure made of socio-cognitive units, traits, or a moral identity. Below, I show that the *hexeis* are congruent with these theories. In both models, as Lacewing suggests, ES is a function of the self. Thus, the moral epistemology of both models take the self-structures or the *hexeis* as i) a source of moral knowledge – viz. the *hexeis* in co-operation with reason enable us to know what a situation demands, and ii) the object of ethical evaluation – good judgements are based on fitting emotions which are a function of virtuous *hexeis*.

As a source of moral knowledge, ES comes from both the *hexeis*, which are emotional dispositions, *and* the intellect. First, Aristotelian emotions, Sherman explains, are "a sensitivity, a mode of discriminating and registering particulars" (1989:170). But Aristotelian emotions are not themselves perceptual. By 'perceptual' I mean the representational function of the mind – viz. perception as a 'mirror' of an external reality. Sherman does not attribute some kind of perceptual intuitionism to Aristotle's view of the emotions. Rather, the *hexeis* enable good ES because they make us responsive to certain cues (Sherman, 1989:45).

However, the *hexeis*-based ES of FCVE is not separate from reason; the *hexeis* are responsive to the guidance of belief and intellect. According to Aristotle, "anger is a desire [*orexis*] accompanied by pain towards the revenge of what one regards as a slight towards oneself or one's friends that is unwarranted" (*Rhet.* 1378a30–2). Emotions, thus, have both emotive and

cognitive components. Sherman rightly emphasises that the *hexeis* and the intellect are intertwined in Aristotelian ES: our intellect informs the discriminative work of the *hexeis* – i.e. it informs us that an action is an intended insult and, hence, it elicits reason for us to be angry.

Regarding how ES enables good judgements, Lacewing suggests that 'fitting' emotions generate good judgements. The problem is that 'fittingness' does not take us far because 'fitting' emotions are not a moral notion; a sexist joke might be funny (fitting to the standards of a joke in terms of humour) but morally inappropriate (2015a). Appropriateness is a moral notion and feeds on a theory of the good because we need to know what a situation demands morally. Emotions need independent assessment. But given that we have abandoned the idea of 'fitting' emotions as veridical perceptions of value – viz. we have rejected the perceptual model of good ES – we need an epistemic standard, such as the *phronimos*. Lacewing rejects the idea of relying on an expert, as circular, therefore he is left with a subjectivist view of ES.[190] However, Aristotle offers a non-circular way to confirm the status of the moral expert which lends itself to a soft realist gloss of true moral judgements.

Aristotle's position offers the following way out: the *phronimos* has wish (rational desire) for the true goods. So, her intellectual perception is guided by the true goods, which she can appeal to even when the *hexeis* give misleading reports of what is truly good. For example, in the case of the *akratic* moral agent, while her wish for true goods is correct, her *hexeis* fails her in choosing other (false) views of the good , leading her to be *akratic*; this is the case where character and intellect may have different views of the good (Pakaluk, 2005; Reeve, 2006; Rabinoff, 2018). If this is correct, intellectual perception ensures good ES (*NE* 1142a23–30;

[190] Lacewing notes that his "account of moral epistemology … leaves it open whether objectivism in ethics is possible. The answer will turn on whether we are able to make the case for a particular structure of dispositions being 'best' or 'most fitting'" (2015a:244). However, I contend that the notions of 'best' or 'fitting' need to be further explained in terms of an independent standard, such as the *phronimos* who has intellectual perception of the true goods via her *boulesis* (wish).

Rabinoff, 2018:114; Hughes, 2013:131).[191] Hence, the *phronimos* can be the independent standard for assessing the appropriateness of emotions on which moral judgements rely. This has the further advantage that intellectual perception aids our self-understanding: we can appeal to it to gain insight into our unconscious motives, as well as our patterns of thinking related to these unconscious states.

As we saw above, good ES requires the collaborative efforts of both intellectual and character virtue. FCVE- ES is not a neutral, perceptual modality but rather an evaluative skill possessed by the virtuous person, which engages her emotional dispositions and intellect. Below, I examine the empirical status of FCVE's ES against the backdrop of psychological science.

d. The Empirical Desideratum

I argue that FCVE's *hexeis*-based ES resonates with current theories of personality (CAPS, Trait Theories, and Moral Identity theories). These theories provide empirical traction to FCVE's model of ES. As we saw, ES on FCVE is a function of character and intellect. This reading aligns Aristotle with Lacewing's model who posits the idea that ES is based on a self's structures. The organisation of Aristotelian character is psychological; it is constituted by the *hexeis*. The Aristotelian *hexeis* are stable dispositions, analogous to the personality traits (or socio-cognitive units) of CAPS which operate on chronically accessible schemas (Snow, 2016; Thompson, 2015, 2016; McAdams, 2015; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006:268). Aristotle says that a *hexis* is not desire or emotion, like sympathy; it is a *characteristic* way of feeling sympathy, hence, a personality variable.

[191] Rabinoff (2018) explains that intellectual perception is a function of practical or evaluative intellect. Excellence in intellectual perception is phronesis: "phronesis is knowledge particularized, or, what is the same thing, it is the capacity for intellectual perception. Specifically, phronēsis is a manner of perceiving that is both articulate enough to be sensitive to and discerning of the ethically relevant features, and flexible and open enough to be determined by deliberation" (2018:114).

The *hexeis* can be translated as personality traits since they, too, are firm like the 'chronically activated schemas' of the CAPS model. The CAPS theorists and Aristotle share the idea that pleasure and reward generate the *hexeis* (FCVE) and the traits of personality (CAPS). In CAPS, reward motivates repeated activation of the schemas and they gradually become chronically accessible, hence, characteristic of the person. Aristotelian habituation works in a similar way: the chronicity and automaticity of virtuous *hexeis* lie in the fact that they are deeply embedded through proper habituation and choice-repetition. As Aristotle claims, we become just by doing just acts. Repeated activation makes one a 'expert' in an area. If FCVE's virtuous *hexeis* are analogous to the chronically activated schemas, as Lapsley and Narvaez suggest (2006:268), then they can be acquired in the way that we acquire skills.

The skill-model of the self resonates with the FCVE's developmental model. Good ES is a competence of the moral expert, the *phronimos*, who interprets situations well, feels the right passions, makes the right choices, and in doing so acts well (Annas, 2011; Russell, 2015). Also, like skills, the virtues are learned intelligently, not mindlessly through unreflective routines. Their performance does not necessarily require conscious deliberation but has cognitive powers. Like skillful drivers or musicians, virtuous people perform moral functions 'automatically', without conscious deliberation and cognitive exertion. According to Lapsley and Narvaez, "the virtuous person has ethical know-how, that is, ethical skills honed to a high degree of expertise…[T]he ethical exemplar, [is] one who is able to demonstrate keen perception and perspective taking, skilled reasoning, ethical focus, and skills for completing moral action" (2006:282).

Although the CAPS model of personality encourages an understanding of well-functioning personality in terms of expertise (Narvaez and Lapsley, 2006), I suggest that the virtues are not skills or, perhaps, they are isomorphic with skills (Russell, 2015). While the skill model of the

self is consistent with FCVE's developmental model, I suggest that the skill-model is better understood as an *analogy* that illuminates how the virtues are acquired: they are acquired in the way that we acquire skills. Following CAPS, I suggest that FCVE's ES is a skill based on the good function of the *hexeis* and *phronesis*.

An alternative way to portray character and ES is the trait theories of personality. These explain more directly the link between the Aristotelian self and ES. According to trait theories, moral traits correlate with the traits of personality theory (McAdams, 2015:313–17). Hence, since Aristotelian ES is a function of character, then ES is a function of personality traits that, in turn, correlate with moral traits. Like Aristotle, trait theorists explain that personality has its basis in genetics: there are three temperamental dimensions of personality: Positive Emotionality (PE), Negative Emotionality (NE), and Effortful Control (EC). Each dimension gives rise to different personality traits of the famous Big Five Trait Theory which further correlate with moral traits: PE leads to extraversion, NE gives rise to neuroticism, and EC gives rise to agreeableness and conscientiousness.[192] The epistemological implication of trait theories is that ES is a function of the traits on Trait Theory. The developmental idea of the Trait Theory is simple: virtuous traits are a matter interaction between our genetics and the environment.

While CAPS and Trait Theories explain ES as a function of skills, socio-cognitive units, or traits, they do not link the self with ES. The biological and other unconscious systems that motivate cognition to select cues from the environment, often win over moral desires and goals

[192] According to McAdams, people "high in agreeableness are empathic, friendly, caring, modest, and altruistic. Those low in agreeableness carry the social reputation of being disagreeable, antagonistic, callous, mean-spirited, selfish, and even cruel. In the realm of virtuous habits, research consistently shows that people who score high on measures of agreeableness are more sensitive to the suffering of others, more positively disposed toward fairness and reciprocity, and more loyal to others with whom they feel close bonds, compared to those lower in agreeableness. Social actors high in conscientiousness are industrious, reliable, persevering, rule abiding, and achievement oriented. They are more prone to guilt, compared to less conscientious individuals, and guilt proves to be a strong motivator for self-regulation and prosocial behavior" (McAdams, 2015:315).

(Narvaez, 2009; Snow, 2016:136). How could the fragmented self of personality theories prioritise moral schemas over non-moral schemas, unless one has deep commitment with moral goals? Since "cognition is too fragmented to support the kind of integrated personality needed to sustain robust virtues" (Snow, 2016:136), it stands to reason that we often miss what is morally important in situations.

Moral Identity theories try to bring moral goals into focus. I contend that good ES requires a moral focus, which is a function of a strong moral identity. Moral identity reflects the degree to which moral ends (also, moral traits, desires, values) are central to a person's self-understanding and motivational system (Silverstein and Trombetti, 2013:249).[193] For Augusto Blasi (1984; 2005), a moral identity consists of moral desires and moral traits, e.g. being honest or compassionate, that are the central part of one's life 'narrative' or self.[194] If moral desires are strong, then moral goals take priority over non-moral goals. Aquino and Reed (2002) further develop Blasi's theory and hold that moral identity is one among various schemas of the self whose accessibility depends on whether situational cues activate this identity (schema) instead of another.

Another way to conceptualise moral identity is as part of the self-concept which is a developing 'autobiographical' narrative (McAdams). The idea is that if moral education makes the goals of virtue and moral desires a central part of the learner's self-narrative, then virtuous desires will be reliably felt because they are already a central part of the person's narrative identity.

[193] Blasi fashions the theory of Moral Identity on the basis of Erikson's idea of a narrative identity. According to Blasi, Integrity, i.e. the tendency to retain internal self-consistency, depends on how much we are committed to the beliefs and values that define the self.

[194] According to McAdams, one acts on genuine moral desire when one "commits the self to achieve an end that society deems to be good and praiseworthy, deliberates about the means and social complexities that are relevant to the end, develops a plan to achieve the end, and then strives to make good on the plan" (McAdams, 2015:321).

Moral identity theories and narrative identity theories are in effect integration of the conscious and unconscious systems of the mind in a person's character.

Aristotelian character has a strong cognitive and affective commitment on virtue and the good life – viz. moral focus. Hence, Aristotelian character's deep structures are a bulwark against situational influences. However, the Aristotelian self is more seamless, viz. not fragmented in different identities. In particular, the Aristotelian self is ethical because it is constituted by *hexeis*, which are fundamentally ethical in how they relate to desires and *eudaimonia*.[195] This means that no matter what roles and other commitments one has, the question of the best life pervades every sphere of life and activity. Hence, for FCVE, moral identity is not one separate identity among many different ones. Character, as Kupperman explains, integrates a person and a life as a whole. Moreover, a sense of self is crucial to happiness because it is the locus and source of the sense that one's life has meaning. This is also what brings coherence to the various components of a person's life (Kupperman, 1991:143).

The main problem of fragmentation for the Aristotelian self is the conflict between reason and passions. This creates dissonance phenomena and, possibly, defensive thinking that distorts ES. Since good ES is a necessary condition of moral knowledge and a truthful living, then good ES presupposes that passions are in line with intellect. In contrast, the non-virtuous person is constantly susceptible to *akrasia* and a series of 'cognitive dissonance' phenomena and biases, as dissonance studies confirm (Silverstein and Trombetti, 2013:243–44). It becomes

[195] The natural character is the starting point of the moral traits that result from habituation. While nature endows some people more than others, the very idea of FCVE is that moral education can overcome the defects of nature. So while Aristotle is an empiricist in his accounts of learning – viz. we learn by experience – he also argues that we are primed by nature to receive the virtues: "Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit" (1103a24–25). Aristotle recognises that natural traits need proper nurturing. Developmental psychology today confirms that we are born with basic pre-moral and prosocial sensibilities, as well as various temperamental traits (Thompson, 2015 & 2016; Narvaez, 2015 & 2016). On this account, positive parenting experience has been identified as having epigenetic effects on these sensibilities and determines long-term flourishing.

increasingly clear that the *hexeis* align with current personality and mental health models, confirmed by studies showing that there is significant similarities between *eudaimonia*, moral virtue, personality and mental health (McAdams, 2015). Psychological science – including psychotherapies – stresses that a well-functioning mind involves the harmonious blending of the two mind systems into optimum socio-moral environments. As Narvaez (2015:252) argues, "those with cognitive, emotional, or psychopathological limitations tend not to display an agile mind. An agile mind is a necessary component of a virtuous moral life."

Concluding Remarks

The motivation for pursuing this thesis is to understand the notion of morality in pluralist settings while retaining an objectivist moral outlook. The scope of this work ranges over both contemporary and 'ancient' discussions. Heeding Aristotle's advice that the pursuit of ethics concerns practical matters, the aim was to investigate FCVE as a viable conceptual guide that could shed light on how to think about the normative challenges behind some of today's problems.

The contemporary aspects to which this work can be applied to relate to the kind of questions people pose in today's rapidly changing world. Some of these concerns are not entirely new, for it would be amiss to not acknowledge that each generation have had to battle their fair share of existential (and moral) challenges. Nevertheless, new challenges often pose themselves as new values that confront our existing ones, and it is in this context that we face fundamental ethical questions like 'Which values are right or wrong?' and 'Do the same values hold for everyone?'

A very real worry sets in when people are unable to integrate new information. As I have shown in chapter five, the inability to integrate new information will mean we cannot respond to the matter in a moral way (i.e. appropriately, such as acting on defences). Such phenomenon is likely to lead to the triggering of our automatic processes taking over our moral self and distort our ability to live eudaimon lives.

It is in this context that moral philosophy might be able to lend a guiding hand – not in the capacity of offering ready-made prescriptions as to what is right or wrong, but to provide a framework in which people can explore the values they hold dear against the background of fundamental concepts such as 'good', 'right' and 'virtue' that leads to deeper understanding

about what is to live well. This is where I see the contemporary and the ancient overlap: people naturally pursue what they think is good, but it is all too possible to have a wrong conception of the good. Since a God's-eye view of what the good is unavailable to us, the next best guide we have to go on, I believe, are the virtues.

Virtues understood in Aristotelian ethics are excellences of both a person's character and her intellect; in the language of contemporary psychologists, being virtuous is being both internally and externally self-knowing such that the agent is in tune with herself and the wider world. Through gaining a sense of the proper places of things in the world and how to stand in relation to them, we are more able to 'hit the mean' and bring about virtuous actions that are constitutive of *eudaimonia*.

It is in this context that I hope to further develop my work, applying it to the field of psychology. Equipped with the conceptual understanding of what flourishing entails, substantiated by further accounts of empirical psychology and education theory, I believe there is room for valuable work to be carried out.

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